SCENES IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.

THIRTY-SIX LESSONS

FOR

TEACHERS AND ADVANCED CLASSES.

BY

W. HANSON PULSFORD.

ELEVENTH EDITION

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PREFACE.

While the necessity of choosing these "Scenes in the Life of Jesus" with a view to use in infant classes has largely precluded any consecutive treatment of the subject, an attempt has been made to suggest such a treatment to the careful student. The division of the lessons in the "Table of Contents" is intended to assist in this. The life of Jesus falls most naturally into four parts: —

The time of preparation, ending with his call to active work at the baptism.

The Galilean ministry, with its brighter tone and early prospects of success.

The time of exile which follows the death of John the Baptist, and leads Jesus to go up to Jerusalem.

The story of the final conflict vith the authorities in the sacred city, which led to the crucifixion.

Corresponding to these stages in the life, there will be found a gradual development in the tone of the teaching,— from the Baptist's call, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," with which Jesus began, to the far tenderer and nobler personal message, which was entirely his own.

The criticism of the Gospels, which underlies these lessons, has of necessity been to a large extent presupposed. The general position is that Mark is the earliest, and the Fourth Gospel by far the latest, of our narratives; also, that at least a generation elapsed between the death of Jesus and the compiling of the earliest records from the tradition. For a more detailed study, Carpenter's "Synoptic Gospels" must be referred to. It is hoped that the suggestion at the head of each lesson will be carefully followed out, as the student can come to understand how we arrive at our picture of the historical Jesus only by direct study and comparison of the sources themselves.

The books which will probably be most useful are "The Synoptic Gospels," already referred to; "Life in Palestine," by the same author; "The Bible for Learners"; and, on the whole, Keim's "Jesus of Nazara." If used carefully, Renan's "Life of Jesus" will often be found suggestive. The various Lives of Jesus which are written from the traditional standpoint are hardly likely to help us to get beyond tradition to the simpler facts, through which the Great Teacher is revealed to us.

It is hoped that these lessons will help our elder scholars in some measure to understand the process and to appreciate the results. If they lead them, escaping from the theological Christ which is our inheritance from the Middle Ages, to catch the inspiration of the living personality whose presence awakened the passion for high living in the minds of common people before either the New Testament or the Church existed, these lessons will have done something to further one of the great ends for which we are working together in our Sunday Schools.

W. H. P.

JULY, 1895.

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LESSON I.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

(Matt. i. 1-ii. 12; Luke i. 1-ii. 20.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."—Matt. i. 21.

READ the passages referred to. Compare Matthew's story with that in Luke. Note that all this material is lacking in Mark and John.

I. WHAT ARE THE GOSPELS?

Soon after the death of Jesus his followers came to believe that before very long, and certainly during the lifetime of the apostles, he would return in glory from the open heavens, to set up his kingdom upon earth (Mark ix. 1; Acts i. 11). There was therefore no need to make any record of his life and teaching. When, however, as his contemporaries died, this belief in the speedy coming of Jesus began to decay, men came to make record of the sayings of the Master and the traditions about him which were current in the early church. There were probably many such collections (Luke i. 1), and our Gospels are attempts to arrange this material into relatively consecutive and complete accounts. While there is considerable difference of opinion as to their date, a fairly conservative estimate may be said to regard Luke and John as certainly the latest, and written after the companions of Jesus had all passed away. It is just possible that Matthew and Mark may have arisen while some were still alive who had seen Jesus. A collection of the sayings of Jesus on which our Gospel according to Matthew was probably based was made while the men about Jesus were alive. In the main, therefore, the Gospels present to us what was currently believed about Jesus in the early church, after the death of Paul, and from 30 to 100 years after Jesus was crucified.

II. JESUS THE SON OF JOSEPH AND MARY.

The Fourth Gospel speaks distinctly of Jesus as the son of Joseph (John i. 45, vi. 42). The genealogies in Luke and Matthew which trace the descent of the Christ have no meaning unless he were Joseph's son (Matt. i. 16; Luke iii. 23). In Matthew xiii. 55 he is spoken of as the carpenter's son. Luke iv. 22 asks, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Nowhere in all her recorded relation to him does the mother of Jesus betray any consciousness of his being not the son of Joseph, but the offspring of the Most High. On the other hand, the Church gradually, in its desire to honor Jesus, came to regard him as of a supernatural origin, and, misinterpreting a famous passage in the Old Testament, regarded him as born of a virgin. (See Isaiah vii. 14, where the word translated "virgin" means simply "young woman," and the reference is evidently to a child who is to be born during the reign of Ahaz.) In olden times the greatness of great men was often accounted for in this way. In our own time we are not satisfied to explain such things by simply stating that they are of miraculous origin.

III. THE BIRTHPLACE OF JESUS.

It is by no means certain that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It is quite possible that, when men came to regard Jesus as the Christ, they concluded that he was born there, because a passage in Micah which they referred to the Messiah names Bethlehem as his birthplace (Micah v. 2). The reason which Luke gives (Luke ii. 1–5) to explain why Jesus was not born in Nazareth, the city of his parents, seems to be incorrect. Not only have we no record of any such taxation, but the method of it, according to Luke, is impracticable and entirely counter to Roman usage. The result is that many of the foremost authorities regard Nazareth as the birthplace of Jesus.

IV. THE STORIES OF THE BIRTH.

The beautiful story which belongs to Luke alone, of the shepherds watching by night and being told by angels of the birth of the Christ, need not lose value for us because we no longer, like our predecessors, regard it as sober prose, but rather as telling us in picture language that, in the dark night when Jesus was born, the angels were singing because of the light and life which he has brought to men.

The story of the wise men, too, is only of value to us when we regard it as the unconscious poetry of the loving honor in which men long ago used to hold the Master. The fruitless endeavor to explain the star by all kinds of possible and impossible hypotheses is due to men's reading as sober fact what is only a beautiful tradition. A later form of the story represents the wise men as three kings, each representing one of the three quarters of the globe known to the ancients. If we refer to the apocryphal writings, we shall see how, as time passed, the legends about the child Jesus became still more elaborate. (See the "Gospel of the Infancy.")

V. LESSON HINTS.

1. Dwell upon the fact which these beautiful stories teach in symbol. The time is coming when rich and poor, east and west, shall gather to the light and truth and love of God for which Jesus stands. Could we see as God sees, our hearts, too, would be full of heavenly music.

2. The value of Jesus to us is that he is of our very nature. Human as we are, he shows us, as no other does, what our human life may become.

"Was Christ a man like us?—*Oh, let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!"

VI. QUESTIONS.

1. What are the Gospels?
2. How did the stories of the birth of Jesus arise?
3. What truth underlies them?
4. Do you think that people would have treated Jesus as they did if the stories told about his birth were to be taken literally?
5. Ought the belief that anything is miraculous to be a reason for regarding it as divine?
6. Are the common, orderly, unchanging ways of nature, whereby life grows to all its countless forms of beauty and wisdom, God's ways? Would they be more his if they were not orderly and intelligible, but what we call miraculous?
7. If Jesus were not human as we are, could we fairly be called on to try to be as he was?

NOTE.—"The Bible for Young People," Carpenter's "Synoptic Gospels," and "Life in Palestine when Jesus lived," Hausrath's "New Testament Times," are recommended. Farrar and Geikie are full of color and useful information, but are not written from the critical standpoint.

LESSON II.

THE HOME OF JESUS.

(Read Matt. ii. 13-23; Luke ii. 21-40.)

LESSON TEXT.—"And the child advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."—Luke ii. 52.

READ the lesson passages, and refer also to Mark iii. 21, 31-35, vi. 4; John vii. 5. Find Bethlehem and Nazareth on the map.

I. TWO MORE STORIES OF THE INFANCY.

1. *The Presentation in the Temple.*—The Third Gospel tells us that, when his parents — that is, Mary and Joseph (Luke ii. 27)— brought Jesus to present him to the Lord in the temple, the aged Simeon and afterward "Anna a prophetess," were miraculously empowered to recognize the child as the Messiah, and to foretell his future. Apart altogether from the miraculous features of the story, it seems incredible, if it be true, that neither Mary nor the brethren of Jesus were later or in any way conscious of his divine mission, but rather tried to hinder his work. Note that in verse 39 Mary, Joseph, and the child "returned into Galilee to their own city, Nazareth." The First Gospel, on the other hand, tells us that Mary and Joseph and the child went from Bethlehem to Egypt, and remained there till after the death of Herod. On their return they only selected Nazareth because it was safer there than in Judæa (Matt. ii. 14, 22-23).

2. *Herod's Massacre of the Innocents.*—The fact that Josephus, who carefully mentions all the cruelties of Herod, should make no reference whatever to this atrocity, throws doubt upon the story. Moreover, as we have seen above, the flight into Egypt does not appear compatible with the record in the First Gospel. It is interesting to note, as showing how loosely the New Testament writers use the Old, that in Matt. ii. 15 the words of Hosea xi. 1. are arbitrarily applied to Jesus, and made the reason for the whole story of the journey to Egypt.

II. THE NAZARETH HOME.

We do not know much of the real childhood of Jesus as he grew up with his parents in Nazareth. He remained obscure and unknown until in early manhood he comes forward, in opposition to the wishes of his friends and relatives, as a teacher. *Nazareth* was a beautiful village among the hills, lying some 1,200 feet above the sea, and reached from the plain of Esdraelon by a mountain path. The hills about the village were terraced into vineyards, and among them clustered the flat-roofed houses of the sturdy Nazarenes of Galilee. Life was simple there, and religion less formal than in the south. In the spring time especially the whole land blossomed into rare beauty, and from the eminence behind the town all Galilee lies spread out at one's feet. One can see Tabor to the east, northward, beyond range on range of hills, the snow-topped Hermon (10,000 feet) sixty miles away, to the west the blue waters of the Mediterranean, forming a background to the

bold headland of Carmel, while southward over the wide plains of Esdraelon the Samarian hills shut out the further south. (Refer closely to the map.) *The home of Jesus*, as became Joseph, one of the village carpenters, was simple in the extreme. It probably was built of rough stone, with a flat clay-plastered roof, and may have consisted of but a single chamber, with a rude workshop attached. But the climate was warm, and the child must have lived mainly out of doors, playing with the urchins of the village, and beginning to notice all those details of village life with which in later years his memory was so richly stored. Helping his mother, looking after the younger children, romping about the village street, or gazing with curious eye at his father's work, Jesus, as a child, was but a poor Galilean workman's boy, knowing some of the austerities and nothing of the so-called luxuries of life.

III. Lesson Hints.

1. Let the stories about Jesus tell us something about the gratitude and love of his early followers. When they loved to tell of the joy of the aged Simeon and Anna, they are unconsciously picturing what Jesus was to them and may be to us. The song of Simeon was singing in their hearts as they experienced the joy of brotherhood and help in learning to live the simple religion of Jesus. On the other hand, the cruelty of Herod found a response in Christian experience. The world is often a hard world to the good, and to be a Christian then meant persecution and often death. Even to-day men of the Herod temper have little sympathy for those to whom truth and simplicity and honor are more than any outward advantage.

2. Dwell on the training of home. Love, unselfishness, self-control, obedience, all are learned there as they can be learned nowhere else. They are learned also most easily in the early years, when habits have as yet no power, and our whole nature is sensitive. What we learn as children goes deep into the secret sources of our maturity.

3. Outward advantages — wealth, ease, lavish comfort — are by no means necessary conditions of noble life. The men to whom the world owes most have often been children of the common people, and have learned their greatest lessons in rude surroundings. What seems pleasant is not always best.

IV. Questions.

1. What can we learn from the later stories about the infancy of Jesus?
2. Describe what you would have seen from the top of the hill behind Nazareth in Christ's time?
3. Do you think natural beauty influenced the childhood of Jesus?
4. Why should we value our childhood and the opportunities of our home life? How should we use them?
5. In what ways does the childhood of Jesus suggest to us that poor outward conditions are no real hindrance to the best and richest life?

LESSON III.

JESUS AT SCHOOL.

(Luke x. 26; Matthew v. 17; Luke iv. 17.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Take fast hold of instruction: let her not go, for she is thy life."—PROVERBS v. 13.

READ passages bearing on the relation of Jesus in later life to the law, the home, the synagogue, the lessons of nature to man; *e.g.*, Luke iv. 16, and the parables.

I. THE HOME TEACHING OF JESUS.

1. All Jewish parents regarded it as their duty to instruct their children in reading and writing, and to familiarise them with the teachings of the law. It is not at all clear that Jesus had any school instruction, at any rate as we understand it. We find schools established, it is true, as early as 63–65 A.D., but it is fairly open to question whether there was any school in the small upland village of Nazareth. It is perfectly evident, however, that Jesus was well taught. He is called on to read and to expound the lesson from the prophets in the Nazareth synagogue, and in his conversation with the lawyer and elsewhere he shows careful knowledge of the scriptures. Luke iv. 16–30; Matt. xxii. 35. He probably learned to commit to memory long passages from the law, and, as we infer from his more constant reference to it, appears to have been specially familiar with the book of Isaiah.

2. Joseph seems to have taught him to work as a carpenter. Mark vi. 3 refers to Jesus as "the carpenter"; and we know that even the most learned of the Jews always learned a handicraft, so as to be able, if need were, to live honestly in the sight of all men. Such a training in patient, careful, honourable work must have counted for much in the training of the Master.

3. Most important of all, however, must have been the education of the simple, godly atmosphere of the Nazareth home. In all that Jesus says of our heavenly Father we may read something of what that name had come to mean to him, as he learned its wisdom and tenderness from Joseph. No man can know the fulness of the Master's thought of God to whom the name "father" is not a word made rich and beautiful through the blessed experiences of a child in a happy home. There were, moreover, brothers and sisters. From Matt. xiii. 55, 56 (Mark vi. 3), we gather that Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters. What lessons of patience, self-control, unselfish service, and brotherly love these home relationships must have taught! How Christ's reference to the brotherly relation, and his founding of a church, which was rather a brotherhood, point back to the lessons of these early days at home!

II. THE TEACHING OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

The synagogue of Nazareth was the centre of the religious life. Three times in the week, at any rate,—on the Sabbath, on

Monday, and on Thursday,—the villagers gathered there. The men sat on one side of the house, the women on the other, the old men in the front seats, the younger ones behind. Together they stood up and recited Deut. vi. 4–9; xi. 13–21; Num. xv. 37–41. Then some one was called on to pray, using ordinarily some familiar and well-known form of prayer. Others, at the call of the presiding elder, read and expounded passages, first from the law (the Pentateuch), and then from "the prophets," as the books from Joshua to the end of 2 Kings, as well as our prophetical books, were called. A translator usually rendered the Hebrew Scripture which was read into the native dialect of the people, and often a short sermon followed. There Jesus became familiar with the "sacred writings," of which the author of 2 Timothy says that they "are able to make thee wise unto salvation." There, too, he came in touch with that informal religious life which gave birth to sentiments like the following: "A good life is better than high birth"; "Patience and silence in strife are the mark of a noble mind"; "With the same measure with which a man measures to others, it will be measured to him again."

III. The Teaching of Nature.

The whole later teaching of Jesus tells us how the fair living earth about him spoke to him of God. The mountain top was his habitual place of prayer (Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46; Luke vi. 12.) There in the silence of the night, above the sleeping village by the lake, when the stars came out and the eternal was about him, God seemed near. The fields, the seed, the soft gentle wind, were the things which he made use of to tell the message of the glad tidings to men. Can we doubt that, even as a child, he, too, had an eye and a heart for it all? To him, indeed, these things had "power to make our noisy years seem moments in the being of the eternal silence."

IV. These Things meant Education.

To educate means to draw out the capacities of a man's nature. Not the imparting of information alone can educate. The common things about us far more than our schools may educate us, as they educated Jesus, to *be men*. Without that education of heart and character all outward culture and training avail us but little towards realising the best possibilities of life. What a man *is* is always of far more importance than what he knows.

V. Questions.

1. Did Jesus go to school? Where?
2. In what three ways mainly was he educated?
3. What does education mean?
4. Do you remember anything in the later life and teaching of Jesus which suggests to us what things were of most importance to him in his youth?
5. What was "the law"? What were "the Prophets"? What do we read in 2 Timothy about them? (Use the Revised Version, and compare it with the Authorised in 2 Tim. iii. 16.)
6. What does our lesson text mean by "instruction"?
7. Do we in any way "know" more than Jesus did?

Note.—Carpenter's "Life in Palestine when Jesus lived," the "Bible for Learners," Hausrath's "New Testament Times," Schürer's "New Testament Times," the *Information and References* in Geikie's "Life of Christ," will be found useful. The first-named of these books is simply invaluable as a hand-book for learners.

LESSON IV.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

(Luke ii. 41–52.)

LESSON TEXT.— "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."— JOHN vi. 38.

READ the passage carefully. Note that it occurs only in Luke, and call to mind Luke's other narratives of the child Jesus. Compare ii. 51 with Mark iii. 31 and Matt. x. 36.

I. THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE NARRATIVE.

There is nothing in this beautiful story of the boy Jesus which can lead us to say certainly that it is only a tradition born of the later loving thought of what the youth of the Messiah must have been. Josephus, with his inordinate conceit, tells, indeed, a similar story of himself, how that the chief priests and wisest men of Jerusalem used to come to him when he was fourteen years old "to learn what was exactly true with reference to the laws." But there are several points which may make us somewhat doubtful with regard to this story of Jesus. *First.*— Jesus does not appear to have been a precocious child. The Nazarenes are completely surprised when he comes forward as a teacher. *Second.*— While Jesus was undoubtedly familiar with the lofty sentiment of the Old Testament, he nowhere appears to have had any interest in those trivial hair-splittings with which, as we shall see in Lesson VI., the "doctors" in Jerusalem busied themselves. The interest of Jesus was wholly in the *spirit* of religion. That of the Jerusalem schools was almost as wholly in its letter and form. *Third.*— The attitude of Jesus to the parents who had sought him sorrowing is not in accord with his gentle and loving spirit. *Fourth.*— The statement in verse 51 does not tally with the fact that later on Mary, with the brothers of Jesus, tried to hinder his work as a teacher. *Finally.*— The story may well be an echo of the thought which was so familiar to Paul, that the simple wisdom of Jesus was far beyond all the subtleties of the schools (1 Cor. i. 19, 20, 27; iii. 18.

II. THE BOY JESUS AT JERUSALEM.

When the long caravan of pilgrims set out from Galilee to the holy city, Jesus probably more than once went with his parents. How it must have impressed the boy! Day by day, singing psalms as they went, the pilgrims drew nearer to the holy city. When at length it burst upon their sight, the golden dome on the hill, amid the vast, wide-reaching roofs of house and palace within the walls, shining in the sunlight, their enthusiasm burst into loud hallelujahs. Praise ye the Lord! To the lad from the little village among the hills, how wonderful it must all have been,— not only the crowds of the city, but the services! The great temple courts, the beautiful and elaborate ceremonial, the sacrifice, the incense, the worshipping multitude, the rich vestments of the conse-

crated priests of Jahweh, must have revealed a new world to the boy. There, too, he would come in contact with the vast world without. From all scattered lands men of many tongues thronged the sanctuary; and ever and again the tramp of the Roman soldier brought silence, as looks of hatred told how men loathed the iron hand of Rome. On the homeward way, what eager questions drew from neighbour and friend a perfect flood of light on all the chafing, restless, passionate, religious patriotism of his fellow-countrymen! Jerusalem marked an epoch in the training of the lad. One sees the mark of it in that last sad journey to the city, where, too, even if it cost him his life, he must tell men of the great unseen kingdom which is God's. We read it anew in his passionate cry over the city, "Oh that thou hadst known the things which belong unto peace!" (Luke xix. 41, 42. Compare Matt. xxiii. 37).

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. Is it not remarkable that Jesus, as a boy of ten, must have stayed three days (or, if the "day's journey" is not included in this statement, five days) in Jerusalem without his parents being able, at first, to find any trace of him on their return?

2. The "doctors" of verse 46 are the learned rabbis and scribes who belonged to the great schools in the holy city for the study of the law. The general character of their work was pedantic and formal in the extreme. Some of their discussions make the question of the Schoolmen as to how many angels can stand on the point of a needle seem reasonable and important in comparison. (For illustration of this point refer to Hausrath's "New Testament Times," vol. i. p. 108.)

3. The phrase "my Father's house," in verse 49, while appropriate enough to Jesus at the very end of his career, sounds very strange on the lips of a boy of twelve.

4. Verse 50 reads strangely of the Mary to whom Gabriel was said, in i. 26, to have appeared, and who was presumably aware of all that is narrated of the supernatural fatherhood of Jesus in the preceding chapter. Our story, as verse 48 clearly shows, evidently regards Jesus as Joseph's son.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Critical authorities (see, *e.g.*, Keim) are divided as to the historical character of this story. Discuss the question on its merits.

2. Contrast the religion of the schools with the religion of Jesus. What may we learn on this point from Paul?

3. Make the boy's visit to Jerusalem graphic.

V. Questions.

1. Do you think this story is accurately correct? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. What must the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem, as a boy, have meant to him? What did he see there?
3. What kind of learning were the doctors at Jerusalem interested in? Have we any trace of such interests in the thought and teaching of Jesus?
4. What did Jesus say in later days about the temple? What did the early church think about it? Matt. xxi. 13; Rev. xxi. 22.
5. What did our lesson text mean to Jesus? Do you think his conduct, as told in this lesson, is in accord with it?

LESSON V.

JESUS' COUNTRY.

(Mark ii. 16; Matt. xviii. 17; Luke xx. 22; Luke xiii. 1.)

LESSON TEXT.—"In the Lord shall all Israel be justified, and shall glory."—ISAIAH xlv. 25.

REFER to a map of the Roman Empire in the time of Jesus. Distinguish Judea, Samaria, Perea, and Galilee. Call to mind what the New Testament tells us about the "publicans" or tax-gatherers, and about the cruelties of Herod. Look out the passages given above.

I. THE EARLIER HISTORY OF PALESTINE.

Palestine lay upon the natural highway between the great river valleys of the Nile on the one hand and the Tigris and Euphrates on the other. From very early in her political existence she became a frontier state between Egypt to the south-west and the Assyrian-Babylonian empire to the east. The history of the monarchies of Judah and Israel is that of one continual change of servitude. First Israel, and then Judah, fell before the Assyrian and Babylonian armies. On the return from captivity, when Babylonia fell into the hands of the Persians under Cyrus, Babylonian was only exchanged for Persian domination, which in turn gave place to the rule of the successors of Alexander the Great. We have thus four main periods: the Assyrian, lasting roughly from 750 to 600 B.C.; the Babylonian, from 600 to 540 B.C.; the Persian, from 540 to 330 B.C.; and the Greek, from 330 B.C. to the great revolt under Judas Maccabæus, in 166 B.C. Not all these centuries of ever-changing tyranny could destroy the national spirit of the Hebrews. They are crushed only to rise again in revolt. Their incessant struggle for that national liberty which was the unquenchable hope alike of nation and prophet cannot but arouse both our sympathies and our admiration. (Refer to the magnificent fight for country and religion under Judas Maccabæus. A brief account of it may be found in the Encyclopædia Britannica, article "Israel," § 12. Illustrate the whole of this historical summary from a map.)

II. THE ROMAN DOMINATION.

The Romans first appeared upon the scene when, in 161 B.C., Judas Maccabæus sent a fruitless embassy to Rome. It was not till 63 B.C. that they took any active part in the government of the country. In that year Pompey, taking advantage of a struggle between Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, two of the Jewish princes who appealed to him for a decision, entered the city, carried many of the inhabitants as slaves to Rome, broke down the walls, and, worst of all, entered, and thus desecrated, the Holy of Holies. In 37 B.C. Herod, the son of Antipater, was appointed king by the Romans, and until his death, in the year 4 B.C., held the country down by merciless cruelty. His subjects hated him with an undying hatred. He was only enthroned after a Roman siege of Jerusalem which was well-nigh unique in its ferocity, (not even the women and children being spared; and his acknowledged capacity as a ruler did not weigh for a moment against the national detestation of his barbarous and alien policy. He adorned Jerusalem with splendid buildings, and lavished money on magnificent games, striving in every way, although in vain, to supplant the national spirit of his subjects by Greek and Roman culture and civilization. On his death Palestine was divided among his three sons in spite of a revolt of the whole nation which was only quelled by the iron hand of Varus, the Roman general, who finally, by way of penalty, crucified no less than 2,000 Jews at Jerusalem. Archelaus thus became ethnarch of Judea and Samaria, while Herod Antipas, his younger brother, was made ruler of Galilee and Perea, a post which he held until his banishment in 39 A.D. In the year 6 A.D. the Romans deposed Archelaus, and his kingdom was placed under the procurator of the Roman province of Syria. Revolt again broke out, headed by Judas, the Galilean (Acts v. 37), to be crushed once more with relentless severity. Taxes were imposed, and ruler after ruler of Syria was allowed to enrich himself on money extorted by force and cruelty from the unhappy Jews. Of these rulers, Pontius Pilate (26-37 A.D.) is best known to us. Finally, on the death of Herod Agrippa I. (a prince of their own race, who from 41-44 A.D. ruled peacefully and well over united Palestine as the representative of Rome) Palestine became a Roman province, until the revolt which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D., practically ended the separate national existence of the Jews.

III. Political Conditions in the Time of Jesus.

The Government.— Galilee and Perea were under the rule of Herod Antipas. Although enthroned by the Romans, he was, at any rate in semblance, an independent ruler, with the title of tetrarch (Matt. 14; Luke 19), and holding court in the splendid new city by the lake which, in honor of the Roman emperor, he had called Tiberias. Judea and Samaria, on the other hand, belonged to the Roman province of Syria, and were under the Syrian procurators, whose headquarters were in Cæsarea, on the seacoast.

Taxation.— Throughout Palestine the revenues of the rulers were extorted by taxation. The highways were taxed. Duties were payable on all merchandise entering or leaving a town. There was a land-tax and a tax on personal property. Finally there was a poll-tax. The only limit to extortion was the ability of the people to pay. These taxes were all exacted by duly appointed tax-gatherers (the "publicans" of the N. T.), who were hated with the bitterest intensity, not only as official representatives of national slavery, but also on religious grounds, since to the devout Jew to pay taxes to an earthly monarch was to be disloyal to Israel's only King. One constant reproach against Jesus and his disciples was that they associated with "publicans and sinners."

Administration.— Apart from taxation and matters of imperial moment the inhabitants of Palestine largely managed their own affairs. Civil disputes were settled by a court of the elders of the town. Matters affecting religion were decided by the elders of the synagogue. As a higher tribunal, whose authority primarily extended only to Judea, and yet was continually invoked from without, was the Sanhedrin, a court held at Jerusalem, and consisting of seventy-one members, drawn mainly from the priests and Levites and the Jerusalem aristocracy.

The Spirit of the People.— Hatred of foreign domination was its key-note. Again and again, unable to see or to understand its utter futility, the national spirit broke into revolt. The religious passion for independence was indomitable, and under the Romans, as under the rule of their predecessors, it endured the hated foreign yoke only because it could not throw it off. Such was the atmosphere into which Jesus was born. Cruelty, despotism, the grinding burden of taxation, the longing for release, must have been constant topics even among the Nazarenes. Among the older men may have been some whose stories of the massacre of fellow-patriots branded still deeper the hatred of foreign oppression.

IV. Questions.

1. What had the position of Palestine to do with its political history?
2. To what nations in turn were the Jews vassals? Were these centuries of oppression able to crush their patriotism?
3. Sketch the history of Palestine under the Romans. What atrocities must have been fresh in the memories of the men about Jesus?
4. How was Palestine governed when Jesus was a boy?
5. Who were the publicans, and how were they regarded?
6. Was there religious liberty in the time of Jesus?
7. Contrast the government of Palestine with British rule in India, and compare both with the government of our own country.
8. What is your ideal of government?
9. What do you imagine Jesus thought about these things?

LESSON VI.

THE PHARISEES.

(Matt. xxiii ; vi. 1–6.)

LESSON TEXT.—"This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." MATTHEW xv. 8. Also Isaiah xxix. 13.

READ the prescribed passages. Refer to the passages which tell of "a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus." Look out also Luke vii. 36; xi. 37; xiv. 1.

I. HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF THE CHIEF JEWISH PARTIES.

When in 161 B.C. Mattathias, the father of Judas Maccabæus, struck the first blow against the introduction of heathen worship into Judea, he was joined by the chasidim, or pious, who, with him, were willing to give all for religious purity. These were the ancestors of the Pharisees. On the success of the Maccabean revolt, the movement gradually became one rather for outward supremacy than for religion, and the chasidim and scribes (see below) forsook it. It received the support, on the other hand, of the aristocratic and priestly party, whose main aim was to secure the outward power and supremacy which belonged to the high priesthood and the sacerdotal class through their eligibility for temple service, and their control of the temple dues. Thus at the very outset we have the scribes and Pharisees standing over against the Sadducees, as the governing nobility of the Hasmonean party were called.

II. THE SCRIBES.

On the return from captivity, when, under Ezra and Nehemiah, the completed Pentateuch was introduced as the sole rule of life and observance, the people became, in the strictest sense, the people of the law. As they spread through the land, and the synagogues arose, it became necessary that careful and accurate copies of the Pentateuch should be made. This work gradually gave rise to a class of skilled copyists, who became also the interpreters and guardians of the sacred text. In course of time they developed into the professional exponents and interpreters of the law, undergoing a careful training, and gathering in schools at Jerusalem, where they studied the sacred text, and elaborated deductions from it which should provide instruction as to the right and wrong in relation to the most trivial details of life. They are the "lawyers" and "doctors" of the N. T. (*e.g.*, Matt. xxii. 35; Luke x. 25; xiv. 3; ii. 46; v. 17), and, as a class, they were greatly respected. They received the title of Rabbi (my lord), and, owing to their skill in the law, were often appealed to to settle cases which involved questions rather of civil law than of religion. They were the religious teachers of Israel. Their chief fault lay in their extreme literalism and mechanical interpretation, allied with an absolute reverence for tradition. Not what is right or reasonable, but what is the decision of the teachers, was too often what they asked. Hillel, their greatest and most liberal teacher, transcended their method, and has given us some famous and beautiful sayings. "Love peace; create peace; love men"; "The fewer men there are in a place, the more eagerly shouldst thou strive to be a man," are two of the less well known. The party stood for the study and careful elaboration of the law and the "tradition of the elders" (Matt. xv. 2; Mark vii. 3). They were a main factor in the religious life of the nation.

III. The Pharisees.

Much which has been said of the scribes is true of the general attitude of the Pharisees, with whom they are closely associated. The scribe was primarily a student and exponent of the law. The Pharisee was a precisian, eager for its most detailed observance. The name means "separated," and so may well stand for exclusive and formal piety. Many of them were good men of an austere and puritanical stamp. As a class, they stood for the national party and the religion of the nation. They were pre-eminently the "godly" amongst the people, and at first were inclined to welcome Jesus, and to seek in him an ally in the work of religious reformation. Nicodemus came to him, and on three separate occasions we read that Jesus was entertained by men of the order (Luke vii. 36; xi. 37; xiv. 1). In the main, they had become religious fossils, careful about the form and the observance, and laying the burden of it upon others, while careless of the spirit and life which alone can set men free. Together the "scribes and Pharisees" were the revered leaders of the party of national and religious hopes.

The Zealots were an extreme branch of the party of the Pharisees, not confining their aim to religious observance alone, but eager to strike a blow for political independence and the realisation of those dreams of men like Amos and Isaiah of Jerusalem, which were dreams not merely of religious, but of political deliverance. In Luke vi. 15 and Acts i. 13 (R. V.), we see that one of the disciples of Jesus belonged to this order.

IV. The Sadducees.

These, as we have seen, were the aristocratic priestly party. They were ecclesiastics, eager to make friends of the powers that be, easy-going in matters of religion, zealous mainly for the temple and their order. They held by the Pentateuch, but not by the traditions of the elders and adaptations of the law to new requirements, which engaged the attention of the scribes and Pharisees. Unlike these parties, to which any one could be admitted by due qualification, the Sadducees were a close corporation, out of touch alike with the religion and the hopes and aspirations of the nation. They were opposed to anything which might cause a stir, and preferred to rest secure in the favour of the authorities, and the prestige and distinctly respectable emoluments of their order.

V. The Attitude of the Religious People to Jesus.

All three parties became bitterly opposed to Jesus. The Sadducees hated him as an innovator and despiser of the order of public religious observance, who was not only dangerous, but in earnest about religion. The scribes and Pharisees hated him because he exposed the hollowness of their formalities and petty literalism, and taught a religion which depended neither upon tradition nor observance. The Zealots, of whom Judas Iscariot was possibly one, were bitterly disappointed when at length they found that the kingdom of God, of which he spoke, was a kingdom within, and too far above their merely national aims to concern itself with political revolt. We should try to imagine what it must have meant to the great Teacher, loving his people as he did, to be forsaken and finally crucified by those who, after all, more than any others, stood for religion in Israel. The temple was to him a sacred place, the zeal of the Pharisee a sacred zeal, the burning love of home and country had glowed in his heart among the Zealots of Galilee; but, though fidelity to truth meant Calvary, compromise was impossible to Jesus, for to him truth was God.

VI. Questions.

1. Distinguish between the scribes, the Pharisees, and the zealots?
2. How were they related to the Sadducees?
3. Can you think of modern parallels to these?
4. What is the natural relation of a religion of theological tradition, or of ecclesiastical ceremony, or of puritanical observance toward a new and vital truth?
5. Don't you think Jesus was rather hard on the Pharisees in, *e.g.*, Matt. xxiii. 15? If you do, why?

LESSON VII.

THE COMING MESSIAH.

(Amos ix. 11–15; Isaiah xxxv., xlv. 1–3; Daniel vii. 13, 14, 27.)

LESSON TEXT.—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth."—ISAIAH xlii. 4.

READ the passages cited above. Note that Dan. vii. 27 explains who is meant by the "one like unto a son of man" in ver. 13. Compare the A. V. of Dan. ix. 25, 26, with the R. V. Turn to John i. 41, iv. 25.

I. THE EARLY FORM OF ISRAEL'S HOPE.

No disaster could kill the Hebrew belief that, in spite of all suffering and calamity, God would in the end bring to the nation whom he had chosen as his own from among the nations of the earth an age of blessedness. Some day Israel would again be ruled, as under David of old, by "the Lord's anointed." The old national prosperity, seeming more glorious as it became more distant, must return. The day is coming when Israel, powerful, purified, and free, shall rule over the nations of the earth. So in ever-changing picture the prophets of old stirred the hope of a conquered and captive people. National independence and an unheard of prosperity are, however, the constant burden of these ever-changing dreams.

NOTE.—The Hebrew word *mashiach* means anointed, and occurs commonly in the phrase *Jahweh's mashiach* (the Lord's anointed) as applied to the kings of Israel. The A. V. twice (Dan ix. 25, 26), instead of translating it, simply transfers it to English, and writes "Messiah," as though it were a proper name. It is duly translated in the R. V. of the same passage. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures *mashiach* is translated *christos*, the Greek word for "anointed." We do well to remember that "Messiah," "Christ," "anointed," are but the Hebrew, Greek, and English terms for the same thing, and that the word "Messiah" does not occur in the R. V. "Messias," the N. T. form, occurs only twice, and is translated "christos," or "anointed," for the Greek readers of the gospel. The king and deliverer for whom Israel looked came to be called the Messiah; and the hope of his coming, the Messianic expectation, only because the Hebrews called him as they called their own kings, "the anointed" (see Isa. xlv. 1).

II. THE MESSIANIC HOPE IN THE TIME OF JESUS.

In the time of Jesus the poetic pictures of the earlier prophets had long become dogmatic and detailed. On the basis of the Book of Daniel, which was written to encourage the Maccabean revolt, writing after writing was filled with pictures of deliverance. It is no longer confined to Israel. The Messiah is to be the ruler of the whole world. His coming will be heralded by terrible suffering: swords will be seen in the sky, nature will be utterly disorganized, the sun and moon will change places. Then Elias, the thunder prophet Elijah of old, will come (Mal. iv. 5; Matt. xvii. 10; Mark ix. 11; Luke ix. 8; John i. 21). With him, one like Moses, and another prophet (John vi. 14; Matt. xvi. 14). Finally, the Messias, the "Son of Man," the "Son of David" will appear. His enemies will be destroyed, Jerusalem restored to all her splendour, the scattered tribes will be gathered together, and, with Palestine as its centre, all the world will be embraced in the kingdom of Jahweh's people. All disease and suffering will

end; man's years will be prolonged. It will be the full reward for all Israel's suffering. To this picture the men round Jesus looked continually. "All the prophets," they say, "prophesy of nothing else than the times of the Messiah." The higher ideal of righteousness and the redemptive power of suffering of which Isaiah speaks found no place in the popular thought.

NOTE.—A Messianic meaning was forced into O. T. passages. For instance, Zech. xiv. 10 was made to state that the houses of the future Jerusalem should be three miles high. Deut. xxxii. 14 was made to declare that a grain of wheat shall be like two ox kidneys, and that men shall drink wine of the juice of one grape. Later Jewish writings which show us this Messianic vision are numerous. A partial list of them will be found in Carpenter.

III. THE PRACTICAL POWER AND INTENSITY OF THE BELIEF.

The way in which John the Baptist (whom some said to be Elias) stirred the nation to the heart shows this. The readiness of the people to rally to the standard of men like Judas, the Galilean, points to the same thing. Again and again men were found willing to risk their lives by putting to the test the miraculous power they believed God had given them as heralds of the golden age. One commands Jordan to divide before him, another orders the walls of Jerusalem, the apostate, to fall down. Both do so in perfect faith. Such points show us that, amid all discrepancies as to the form of the belief, the belief itself kept the Jews full of eager expectation of the Heaven-sent ruler who should set Israel as the people of Jahweh over the nations of the earth.

IV. THE RELATION OF JESUS TO THIS HOPE.

Jesus had a thought of the kingdom of God which was essentially in conflict with these national expectations. His kingdom was within. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," he complains. He has to check the two sons of Zebedee for their eagerness for chief office in the Messianic kingdom. His whole teaching sundered him from the popular Messianic belief (*e.g.*, the parables of the leaven and the mustard-seed and passages like Luke xvii. 20).

V. THE EFFECT OF THE EXPECTATION ON THE PICTURE OF JESUS.

When men came later on to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the details of the Old Testament statements which were referred to the coming deliverer exercised a leavening influence on the tradition about Jesus. Men argued, for example: Jesus is the Messiah; Isaiah says the Messiah is to be born of a virgin; Jesus, then, can have had no earthly father. In many such ways we trace the influence of the Messianic ideal of the first century upon the traditions which became current as to the life and person of Jesus.

VI. QUESTIONS.

1. What does "Messiah" mean?
2. To whom was the Hebrew word applied? Whom does Isaiah call "the Lord's Messiah" or "the Lord's Christ"? Isaiah xlv. 1.
3. What was the Jewish expectation? Compare its picture of the ideal future with, for instance, W. Morris's "News from Nowhere," or Bellamy's "Looking Backward," or the hope of the best of the Irish nationalists.
4. Did Jesus rise far above the Jewish thought of the kingdom of God? If so, in what ways?
5. What do you think about the coming of the kingdom of God in our own time? What will it mean in society and in national relations? Ought the thought of it to inspire us to help its coming? How did Jesus think he could best bring it about?

LESSON VIII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Matt. iii. 1–12; Mark i. 1–8; Luke iii. 1–18).

LESSON TEXT.—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness."—MATTHEW iii. 3. Also ISAIAH xl. 3.

READ in addition to the prescribed passages Luke vii. 24–28. Refer to Isaiah xx. 2, Zech. xiii. 4, 2 Kings i. 8, R. V., marg., for the significance of John's peculiar dress. Refer to the wilderness of Judea on the map. Where did John baptise? How far was it from Jericho, Jerusalem, Nazareth?

I. JOHN'S PARENTAGE AND TRAINING.

Although the statement in Luke i. 5 belongs to the collection of wonder-stories which the author of the second gospel has recorded about John and Jesus, there is no reason to doubt that it records truly that John was the son of a priest. He belonged to Judea. In early youth the religious atmosphere of Jerusalem must have been about him, and his sense of the pressing need of a religion which went deeper than ceremonial and sacrifice and the details of observance may have been born of that experience. He appears to have forsaken Moses for the prophets. He found his spiritual kinsmen in men like Isaiah and Amos. Following the example of Elijah and the ascetics of his own time, he withdrew to the desert. There amid the eternal silences the great problems of religion and God became at last a clear imperative, and he began his prophetic work as a messenger of the impending wrath of God. His was a fiery Elijah spirit. Clad in the hair mantle and leathern girdle of the prophet, lean with fasting, mighty with the power born of solitude, burning with the zeal of truth, he delivered a message which rang from end to end of the land. First in the wilderness of Judea, later by the banks of the Jordan, and finally northward in Perea, he became the centre of a movement which in more ways than one prepared the ground for him who, at first his disciple, afterwards fulfilled and completed the work of which John was only the herald.

II. THE SCENE AT THE JORDAN.

The news that after a silence of five hundred years God was once more speaking from the lips of a prophet spread fast through Israel. We need not wonder that to them John appeared like a risen Elijah heralding the kingdom of heaven. The common people from far and near, the hated tax-gatherers, even the soldiers, crowded round the fierce-eyed ascetic of the river, and, confessing their wrong, were baptised, and sent away with ringing counsel for a more righteous life. On the outskirts of the crowd were Pharisees arrayed in the ornate holiness of their order, and even members of the aristocratic priestly class. For them, proud in their piety and secure in their ancestral heritage, the son of the desert had only withering words of scorn.

III. WHAT JOHN TAUGHT.

1. *The impending anger of God.* The axe is already laid unto

the root of the unfruitful trees. The winnowing fan of God is even now separating the wheat from the chaff, which a fiery doom is to destroy because of unrighteousness.

2. Repentance. To John, like Bunyan, the divine word was, "Flee from the wrath to come." By a change of heart and conduct become men to whom the approaching day of the Lord shall be light, and not darkness. Do right and thou shalt live.

3. Baptism. The symbolic rite of baptism, as John used it, was new. It marked the purifying power of that change of moral aim which was to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

4. Righteousness. Be kind, be just, do not to others what you would not that others should do to you, was the tenor of his message. Not one word of sacrifice or the fulfilment of the infinite detail of the law. Therein lies John's real greatness.

5. Fasting. He appears to have retained one point in common with the Pharisees. We read in Matt. ix. 14 that his disciples fasted often (see also Mark ii. 18, Luke v. 33). It shows that he had not fully broken with the religious spirit of the time.

IV. Noteworthy Points.

1. The defect of John's teaching is that it lacks the inward inspiration which was the secret of the power of Jesus. It depends largely upon the coercion of fear to bring about abstinence from evil. It has not risen to the sense that to be one's best, for the noble joy of it, is the highest word in religion.

2. What was John's "call"? The bitter cry of the evil and misery around him. The conviction that only by casting out wrong and injustice can peace come.

3. The Messianic expectation, though John disclaims any direct connection with it, undoubtedly had much to do with the power he exercised. It had prepared the soil.

4. The chronological statement in Luke iii. 1 shows us how careless the author is as to any careful verification of his statements. The 15th year of Tiberius falls in the years 29–30 A.D. Lysanias was murdered before the birth of Jesus. Annas was deposed in 14 A.D.

5. The misquotations of Isaiah xl. 3 in Matt. iii. 3, Mark i. 3, Luke iii. 4, throws light on the method whereby prophetic passages are made to describe subsequent events. Note what Isaiah really says.

6. There is no ground for supposing that the locusts of Matt. iii. 4 were not insects, but a kind of bean called by that name, although the suggestion is ingenious.

V. Questions.

1. What do you know about the work and influence of Edward Irving and John Wesley? Can you compare them with John the Baptist?
2. Do you think the self-denial of the ascetic gives a man power?
3. Describe as graphically as you can the person of John and the scene at the Jordan?
4. What were the strong and what the weak points of John's teaching?
5. Did the belief in the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah have anything to do with John's success? Do you think he shared the popular idea of it?
6. Do you know any statement in the Book of Acts which points to the power of the impressions made by John's teaching? Acts xviii. 25.
7. What would a man like John the Baptist preach if he came in our own day? How would he probably be received?

LESSON IX.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

(Mark i. 9-11; Matt. iii. 13-17; Luke iii. 21-23; John i. 29-34.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Jesus said, John baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit."—ACTS xi. 16.

COMPARE carefully the three earliest records of the baptism with one another, and all with that in the Fourth Gospel. "Philochristus" (London, 1878) is helpful.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

We cannot but notice at once the divergences which mark off the four accounts of the baptism from one another. In Mark, which, on the whole, gives us the simplest account, Jesus comes to John and is baptised. As he comes out of the water, he sees the heavens open, and the Spirit coming upon him like a dove, and a voice speaks to him. In Matthew John knows beforehand who Jesus is, and is unwilling to baptise him. After being baptised, Jesus sees the vision, as in Mark, and the people hear the voice, "*This is* my beloved Son," etc. In Luke the descent of the dove "in a bodily shape" is a sign to the beholders that this is the Messiah. In the Fourth Gospel there is no word of the Messiah's having been baptised at all. The descent of the dove is a vision bestowed *on John*, whereby he miraculously recognizes Jesus to be the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." In the second century we find the story still more fully elaborated. Jesus is unwilling to go to be baptised, but does so on the urgent persuasion of his mother and brethren. On his baptism a fire shines round about (or appears in the Jordan); and John asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" Upon receiving the answer, John begs that Jesus baptise him. These successive accounts show us the gradual development of men's thought about the baptism of the Messiah, and point out to us the way whereby we may discern the still simpler facts which underlie the narrative in the earliest of our Gospels.

II. THE PREPARATION IN THE MIND OF JESUS.

Jesus had, unknown and unnoticed, grown to manhood. The Third Gospel says he was "about thirty" years old (Luke iii. 23). From the fourth we learn that he was regarded as "not yet fifty" (John viii. 57). What had been going on during those long silent years of preparation?

1. *The Messianic Hope.*—One cannot but feel that the ardour of the intensely religious spirit of Jesus kindled at the hope of national freedom and righteousness. May it not have been becoming clear to him that the real freedom must be in a change of heart and character, that the coming of the Messiah was not so much an outward deliverance as a change of heart?

2. *The Teaching of the Great Preachers.*—From his after life we learn that the details of the law found no response in his heart. Not even the zeal of Pharisaism could blind him to its formalism.

The words which must have been nearest and mightiest to him were the impassioned cry for righteousness, repentance, hope in the service of God, which are the burden of men like the Isaiahs. See, for example, Isaiah i. 10–17, lv., lxiii. 7–9. Sabbath after Sabbath such teachers in the simple worship of the village synagogue must have been leading the religious life of Jesus to fuller and larger strength.

3. *The Village Life.*—We know something of the helpful spirit of small communities. When one suffers, all suffer. Ties are close. Interests are common. The fortune of each is the fortune of all. May not that atmosphere have brought the young carpenter to ponder much on the question whether this, after all, is not the very heart and essence of religion,—whether God's hope for Israel lay not in careful religious observance, nor in the restoration of external glory and power to the nation, but in the casting out of the spirit of hypocrisy and selfishness by an enthusiasm which should fill men with the joy of that simple, kindly, self-forgetting temper which is their true life as children of the eternal goodness and love?

III. The Crisis and the Baptism.

All these factors of inward growth and pondering prepared for the crisis which the preaching of John the Baptist brought about. From the far south came news of the great national movement, whereby men were in thousands turning toward a new and better life. A preacher like one of the old prophets was there. Even the publicans and soldiers were gathering to confess and be baptised, that they might bring forth the fruit of a better life. Truly, a prophetic cry uttered with prophetic power. It stirred Nazareth. To Jesus it seemed as though here was in some sense the fulfilment of his half-formed hopes. When a little band of Nazarenes set off to hear the preacher, Jesus went with them. The teaching of John thrilled him. Was not God calling *him* to set his hand to the plough, and forsake Nazareth for men? For him, too, a new life was dawning; and, as he entered the water, heaven seemed open, and a diviner spirit came upon him. It seemed as though his Father's blessing lay upon the fresh resolve and the new-found calling to which he was to give his life. The baptism of John begins the conscious ministry of Jesus. Only the silence of the desert lies between, for a resolve like this, must be tested. The new enthusiasm and the trembling power of the inward call of the spirit drive Jesus into the wilderness.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Above all, strive to make the growth of Jesus real.
2. Apply all you know of genuine revival movements to John's work.
3. Fall back upon your own experience to give life and power to the lesson.

V. Questions.

1. Where did John baptise?
2. How far was it from Nazareth?
3. How old was Jesus?
4. What had been preparing him for the determination to become a teacher to which John's message brought him?
5. Can you trace the gradual elaboration of the story of the baptism of Jesus as we have it in the Gospels? Was this process natural and spontaneous? Make it clear, if you can.

LESSON X.

JESUS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS.

(Mark i. 12, 13; Matt. iv. 1–11; Luke iv. 1–13.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Get thee hence, Satan."—MATTHEW iv. 10.

READ the prescribed passages, comparing the earlier account (in Mark) with those in Matthew and Luke. Mark the points of difference between the two latter. Refer to John i. 19–34. Does the narrative in John leave any place for the events of our lesson?

I. THE NARRATIVES OF THE GOSPELS.

1. *Mark.*—In this earliest Gospel we have a perfectly simple statement, couched in the phraseology of early days, that after the great crisis of the new resolve, marked by his baptism, Jesus went apart to face alone the terrible questions as to the meaning of the work to which he felt he was called, and there to fight out the first great decision of his life,

2. *Matthew and Luke.*—These later Gospels give a far more elaborate version of the crisis. The narratives represent Satan as appearing and speaking to Jesus, as transporting him through the air, and, though the temptations are recorded in two different orders, as being three times repulsed by the Master. The narrative of the temptations is detailed; and the very words of the dialogue are in each case given, though with considerable variations. Neither picture for one moment suggests that the writer intended it to be taken metaphorically.

3. *John.*—The Fourth Gospel is entirely silent as to the temptation. A careful reading of this narrative at least suggests that the writer did not feel that the story of the temptation of Jesus was worthy of a place in his picture of the Master's life.

The general conclusion to which these facts seem to lead us is that, as seems in itself most probable, Jesus, before commencing his work as a teacher, sought seclusion, that he might gather strength and see more clearly the right way. This was pictured most naturally in those days, possibly by Jesus, and certainly by the men of his time, as a conflict with the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii. 2). (Compare also Matt. xii. 26; Mark iv. 15; Luke x. 18; Rev. xx. 2; John xiv 30, etc.) Later tradition elaborated the picture. The Fourth Gospel possibly felt that the whole matter was inconsistent with its conception of Jesus as the incarnate "Word" of God. It is interesting to compare these narratives with the stories of the Buddha's conflict with the powers of darkness. Rhys David's "Buddhism," or Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia," Book VI.

II. JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS.

It was the habit of Jesus to seek seclusion, that he might there better realise the presence of God, and alone on the mountain top, under the stars, find counsel and guidance and strength (Mark vi. 46; Matt. xiv. 23, xxvi. 36; Luke v. 16, vi. 12). Now, after the long quiet years of Nazareth, stirred to his inmost depths by the work and preaching of John, he feels the irresistible conviction that he, too, must carry the message of God's truth to men. The very thought fills him with questionings. Religion has had its ever-growing meaning for him; but are his thoughts of it indeed the truth of God? What of the loved hope of a future outward glory for Israel? What of the religious leaders of the nation? What of himself? He must leave the excited throng of the Jordan, and go apart. Only so can he clearly see the right way, and only then know of a surety the divine message of truth and life. It does indeed seem fitting that the very spirit which set his heart aflame with the vision of a new life drove him into the wilderness of Judea to ponder and pray for guidance.

III. The Temptation.

The elaborated pictures of later tradition give us but little clue to the nature of the struggle between the good and evil in the heart of Christ. Hebrews iv. 15, furnishes a better clue when it tells us that he was tempted like as we are. It suggests to us several points: —

1. Jesus was tempted to draw back. May not the later prayer in the hour of his agony, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," suggest to us the temptation which met him on the very threshold? To go out and teach the truth which was gathering in his heart meant that he go alone in the face of overwhelming difficulty. On his side was the voice of personal conviction. Against him were arrayed the whole thought and temper and hope of the religious parties and the people of his day. How many things there were to make the worse appear the better reason! Such work required an Elijah temper like that of John. It was unfit for a gentler and more shrinking spirit. What assurance had he that this message of a kingdom which should be within, coming as the coming of the seed, was indeed the way? Did God really call him to leave the helpful ministries of Nazareth and the Nazareth home and work, for the wandering life of a prophet? But God spoke to him, in memories of the great of old, in the word of John, in the inward kindling of the heart; and God conquered.

2. Possibly a hint that another way offered itself to the Master may underlie Matthew's third (Luke's second) temptation. Why not ally himself with the national hope? Why not stir and awaken to victory the Messianic dream of the conquest of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? Then, at any rate, the nation would be with him, and perchance the hour of Jewish supremacy and deliverance is indeed at hand. But God's deeper and serener counsel prevailed; and Jesus came forth, at first to call men to turn to God from sin, later to tell them of the inward kingdom which, indeed, "suffereth violence," but yet is open only to the childlike in heart.

Whatever its form, temptation to Jesus, as to us, is the conflict of what seems pleasant with what is right, the struggle of duty with personal selfish ease, the call of God to love truth and to love men against the lower call to consider and care only for ourselves.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Bring the temptation of Jesus into line with our own temptations. He was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. iv. 15).
2. Make clear that character is born of conflict. Paul's "I, yet not I" (Rom. vii. 15-23). The truth underlying "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."
3. Bring temptation into the light of the law of development.

V. Questions.

1. How many accounts of the temptation of Jesus have we? Is the earliest the least elaborate? What does the Fourth Gospel say?
2. What were the temptations of Jesus when he felt himself called upon to preach the kingdom of God?
3. Was he tempted at other times? (Luke iv. 13 xxii. 28; Mark viii. 33).
4. What is temptation? May it be the means toward the making of noble character?
5. When we resist temptation does anything in our experience correspond to the last clause of Matt. iv. 11?

Note.—"Ecce Homo" contains a fine attempt to find a meaning in the three temptations of the First and Third Gospel, though on a somewhat unscientific method Keim treats the whole question with his usual care. Geikie and Farrar are useless from a critical standpoint.

LESSON XI.

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK.

(Matt iv. 12–22; Mark i. 14–22; Luke iv. 14, 15.)

LESSON TEXT.— "Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."— MATT. iv. 17.

READ and compare together the passages quoted. Refer also to Luke iii. 18–20 and v. 1–11. Note the order of events in each account, and contrast the whole with the narrative in the Fourth Gospel. Use a map freely throughout.

I. THE FOUR ACCOUNTS.

Mark.— Here we read that the imprisonment of John immediately preceded Jesus' advent as a teacher. He commences in Galilee, and calls Simon, Andrew, James, and John to follow him.

Matthew.— This account is slightly longer than that in Mark, but substantially agrees with it. John is imprisoned. Jesus goes to Galilee, and begins to preach. The four disciples are called.

Luke.— The very brief statement in Luke corroborates the foregoing. It is true that nothing is said as to John's imprisonment being the occasion of Jesus' public appearance as a teacher, and that the call of the four is given later on and in a different form (Luke v. 1–11); but still we have nothing here which conflicts with the order of events given above.

John.— This Gospel gives a wholly different account of the matter. In it the Baptist points out Jesus to his disciples as the Messiah. Andrew and Peter follow Jesus. Philip and Nathanael come to him. Jesus then goes to Galilee, where he is present at the marriage of Cana, and returns to Jerusalem, where he cleanses the temple and is visited by Nicodemus. After working with John in Judæa, "for John was not yet cast into prison," Jesus leaves Judæa, because the Pharisees had heard that he was making more disciples than John. Only after the journey through Samaria with the disciples does he come again to Galilee.

The authorities who are pledged to the inspired accuracy of all four narratives get out of the difficulty by the usual device of inserting the events of one in the narrative of another. It seems probable that the real course of events is that which the Synoptics suggest, and that the narrative of the latest of the Gospels does not give us as trustworthy a tradition as to the beginning of the work of Jesus.

II. JOHN'S IMPRISONMENT.

Shortly after the baptism of Jesus, John, possibly fearing that the religious excitement his preaching had caused would draw upon him the attention of the Romans, appears to have withdrawn to Peræa. There he was at once arrested by Herod Antipas, probably because, as Josephus states, that monarch was afraid that the Baptist's fearless preaching would bring about a revolt. The reason the Gospels give, namely, that John had denounced Herod for immorality, seems not so probable (Matt. xiv. 3–5; Mark vi. 17–20; Luke iii. 19–20). The news which would have caused any but a fearless man to draw back seems to have finally determined Jesus

to carry on John's work. That which the stirring of his spirit at his baptism and the conflict in the wilderness had made clear seems imperative now. John is silenced; Jesus, making Capernaum his headquarters, begins to proclaim throughout Galilee, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

III. Jesus Begins His Work.

He did not, like John, commence as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Jesus was no ascetic. The religious formalism of Judæa did not, however, promise any fair chance of success; so the new teacher turned his steps northward to Galilee, his native land. Possibly he felt that there, where religious prejudice was not so strong, and men's thoughts and lives were alike more free and more simple, he might find a more ready response to his message. Nazareth was, for reasons which soon made themselves apparent, impossible. The splendid new city Tiberias was rather foreign than Galilean. Capernaum, north of it, nestling between the hills and the lake, was neither so large nor so strange. Its people were akin to the simple, hardy mountaineers whom Jesus had learned to understand and love. He makes it his headquarters, and begins work among its townsfolk and fishermen.

That message was at first, at any rate in substance, John's call to repentance (Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 14–15). But John's "Repent" was full of intensest hatred of sin and the terror of coming retribution. In the mouth of Jesus love of the sinner must have already changed the tone of the message which in form was yet but a continuation of John's work. "Repent," cease to do evil, might begin the growing message of Jesus; only the positive inspiration to love and live could fully express it.

As was the custom, as soon as Jesus finds response to his teaching, he summons some of his hearers to go with him in the closer capacity of disciples. Peter, Andrew, James, and John, all of them fishermen, are first called to form the nucleus of the little group of persons who, through that close companionship with Jesus, became the men who afterwards were to turn the world upside down for God. To obey his call as they did, they must have already felt the power of his person and his teaching.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to make very real the effect of John's imprisonment on his followers and upon Jesus. Treat it as a climax to the temptation.

2. Bring all the local colour you can to bear upon the ministry in Capernaum,—hills, sea, boats, houses, market-place, people.

3. Try to make the scholars understand what it was in Jesus that made rough fishermen willing to leave all and follow him.

V. Questions.

1. Have we different accounts of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus? How do they differ? What do you think is the truth, and why?
2. Why was John imprisoned? Who says so?
3. Where did Jesus begin work? Why there? What sort of a place was it, and where did it lie?
4. Who were the first disciples?
5. What did Jesus teach at the beginning of his work? Did it differ in any way from the teaching of John?

LESSON XII.

JESUS PREACHES IN NAZARETH.

(Luke iv. 16-30.)

LESSON TEXT.—"A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country."—MATT. xiii. 57, MARK vi 4.

READ the narrative quoted, and compare it carefully with the parallel versions in Matt. xiii. 54-58 and Mark vi. 1-6. Recall also what was said in lesson iii. as to the worship in the synagogue. Turn to Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, and mark the various points wherein the quotation in Luke iv. 18, 19, differs from it.

I. THE SOURCES.

Luke.— This narrative presents several points of difficulty. It puts the visit to Nazareth very early in the ministry of Jesus, and yet presupposes in verse 23 a well-known and successful ministry in Capernaum. Its interpretation of the words "Physician, heal thyself" is not clear. The quotation from Isaiah cannot accurately represent what Jesus read from the roll in the synagogue. The sudden change of tone on the part of Jesus in the latter part of his discourse seems abrupt and harsh.

Matthew and Mark.— In these simpler versions of the Master's visit to his native place many of these difficulties disappear. The Nazareth sermon is placed somewhat late in his ministry, when he had become well known. The reference to the Gentiles is absent. The whole seems more in accord with what may probably have happened. On the other hand many of the details in Luke bear every mark of historical accuracy. The Fourth Gospel is entirely silent on the point. The traditional interpretation takes refuge, as usual, in the theory of two visits to Nazareth. If we regard Luke's version as a more elaborate form of the tradition contained more truthfully, on the whole, in Matthew and Mark, we are led to some such course of events as the following.

II. THE VISIT TO NAZARETH.

For some time Jesus had been teaching on the borders of the lake. Little by little his first sterner message of repentance had been giving way to the gentler and more beautiful teaching of the kingdom of God which is within. The authority of his speech, the power of his strong and gracious character, above all, the belief that he healed the sick, attracted crowds to his teaching. He had doubtless visited all the towns along the shores of the lovely garden by the little lake, and now the thought of his native town presses upon him. He and the disciples leave Capernaum, and, passing southward through Chorazin and Bethsaida, turn at Magdala southwestward into the hills. Leaving Tabor on the left as the afternoon draws on, they come to Nazareth in the evening. (Refer carefully to a map.) It was a journey not much over thirty miles.

For the first time since he began to teach Jesus sleeps under the old familiar roof. On the morrow there are about him, just as of old, the well-known friends of his long, quiet training-time. He seems to them the same Jesus who had not long before left them,

to go to hear the mighty prophet in the south. On the coming Sabbath, as his custom was, Jesus goes to the synagogue, and, when the time for the reading of the prophets arrives, stands up and offers to read and to expound. Either selecting it specially or finding it by chance the lesson for the day, he reads Isaiah's familiar words of Israel's deliverance from Babylonian rule. Referring them to that greater deliverance which forms the constant inspiration of his teaching, he declares, "To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Only the deepest Christian experience can in any fit way imagine what Jesus out of his very soul must have said to these, his home folk, of the new life of deliverance that filled him as with a divine message.

At first his hearers were stirred, though perhaps rather from admiration of his ability than by any real response to his message. Then came murmuring: What right has he to speak to us with this air of superior knowledge? He is no rabbi, only one of ourselves. The elders remembered, doubtless, disquieting rumours of carelessness about the Sabbath and the observance of the law. He should mend his own conduct first, before he comes to teach us, they murmur. The sense of jealousy spreads. He has belittled his fellows in making so much of himself. He works wonders in Capernaum, but he thinks a talk in the synagogue is good enough for us. It is soon plain that here at any rate there is no open door for the message of Jesus; and, with the lament that a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country and among his own kin, Jesus leaves Nazareth for ever before the rising anger of the fellow-townsmen he loved. It was the first clear sound of the coming storm.

III. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to understand the story from the standpoint of Jesus, then from that of the Nazarenes. Help to make this clear by local detail. Refer to lesson iii. and to any standard Life of Christ for a description of the synagogue.

2. Make it clear to yourself that from now on Jesus was an outcast from home and friends, because he taught what he knew to be true. Not long after this his mother and brethren, urged perhaps by the good men of Nazareth, come to try and take him from his life-work as one who is beside himself. (Matt. xii. 46–50; Mark iii. 20, 21, 31–35; Luke viii. 19–21.)

3. Dwell on the point that we are apt to undervalue what is familiar. Foreign cats have long tails. The joys that lie about us every day, the opportunities and blessings of our common home life, the truths that have been familiar from childhood, are apt to be valued at less than their true value simply because they are familiar. What if the Bible could be entirely forgotten, and then rediscovered as a new literature? Refer to the wild enthusiasm with which men hailed the discovery of classical literature at the Renaissance.

IV. Questions.

1. When did Jesus go to Nazareth to preach? How many accounts have we? What seems to be the true story underlying them?
2. How was he received? Why? How does tradition generally receive new truth?
3. What was the result on Jesus' relations to his own people?
4. Expand and illustrate from our daily experience the truth stated in the lesson text.

LESSON XIII.

JESUS HEALING THE SICK.

(Mark i. 21–28; Luke iv. 31–37; Mark ii. 1–12; Luke v. 17–26; Matt. ix. 2–8.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."—ACTS x. 38.

READ the passages prescribed, and call to mind all that you know about cases of "mind cure" or "faith healing." Do you know anything of the supposed miracles at Lourdes and elsewhere? How do good physicians treat cases of neurosis? Try to enter into the supernaturalism of the common thought of the time of Jesus.

I. THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES OF HEALING.

One of the most marked features of the Gospel records is that they represent the life of Jesus as "steeped in prodigy." On every page there are stories of which the two cited above are by no means exceptional instances. On no less than twenty-six occasions we are expressly told that the people brought all who were sick to Jesus, and he healed them. Not only the "possessed," but the apparently incurable, are made whole; even the dead are raised,—nay, more, the Jesus of the Gospels is pictured as one whom even the winds and the sea obey. Leaving on one side the general question of the "miraculous," and simply examining the traditions as they have come down to us, we find several points of interest. We sometimes have more than one record of the same story. In such cases there are often marked divergences as to place, time, and details. Furthermore, we seem to be able to trace, in some measure, the heightening of the miraculous features of a story as it grows older. Finally we discover that the records of other great persons present similar features.

II. HOW DID THESE STORIES ARISE?

It is only recently that men have begun to look upon religion as natural. For ages it has been regarded as the realm of miracle. This was specially true in times when the thought of the universe as a great ordered whole had not been born. To the men of New Testament times what we call miraculous was the common and natural explanation of every phenomenon. We say that a man is great. They said that he wrought signs and wonders. To them, as to all men like them, it was simply impossible to conceive of a great religious personality apart from miraculous attestation. Once grant the belief in a man's greatness, and his having supernatural power follows as a matter of course. Roman emperors could cure the sick. The Talmud is full of records of wonders wrought by the rabbis. They turn water into blood, uproot trees and move them through the air, cause streams to flow uphill, and not only cure the sick, but cure them at a great distance by the mere word of command. Even Paul, that lover of sobriety and saneness in religion, has no hesitation as to the reality of the supernatural phenomena of his own time. In such an atmosphere the tradition which did not ascribe miracles to Jesus would be impossible.

The origin of the stories under these conditions, during the long years when oral tradition alone formed the link between the actual Jesus and the earliest record about him, can in some cases be traced. Sometimes they were due to the Old Testament, the only Bible of the early Church. That the Messiah is to heal the sick meant to them nothing but a statement of the supernatural power of Jesus. His own words in Luke iv. 18 were referred to the same thing. More often the miracle of the tradition can be traced back to some figurative expression. Jesus broke the bread of life to the multitude, Israel's barren fig-tree withered at his reproach, life came to the dead through his word, are instances. Oftener, while we have the result, we can no

longer trace the process which in the case of Jesus, as in that of other heroes of faith, has set a halo of miracle about the head of the saint. So it was with the Old Testament prophets, with the rabbis of Christ's time, with the Fathers of the early Church, with the saints of the Middle Ages, with Buddha and Confucius and Mahomet and the great ones of all religions. Around each the devotion of their followers has gathered wondrous stories of miraculous power. Miracle was but the natural thought and language of reverence.

III. The Substratum of Fact.

There is nothing in what has been said to prevent our admitting that Jesus did heal the sick. Such a phenomenon is only too common at times of intense religious excitement. A large proportion of nervous disorders are most readily cured in some such way. There is nothing organically wrong. The presence of a great personality, the belief that he can cure, his word of authority, are all that are wanted. Such disorders were likely to be specially present in the high religious tension of Christ's time, and he seems early to have found that his calm presence and word put the evil spirit to flight. Even in the very unfavourable conditions of our own day we find analogies. People regarded as incurable have been made whole by an alarm of fire. "Christian science," "faith healing," "mind cure," all rest at bottom on this same fact that certain nervous conditions are curable by excitement, faith, nervous stimulus. It was vastly more so under the emotional, credulous conditions amid which Jesus lived.

IV. The Attitude of Jesus towards these Things.

So strongly did Jesus disavow all claim to be regarded as a wonder-worker that even the Gospels, in spite of their delight in recording instances of his miraculous power, tell us how sternly he met those who asked for a sign. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign": they shall have no sign but that of the prophet's call to repentance. From Matt. vii. 22, 23, we see how lightly he regarded the mighty works of which the Gospels make so much. Again and again it is reported of him that after some work of healing "he charged them straitly that they should tell no man." It is in spite of his own reiterated injunctions that the sublime Jesus of history has been almost lost to the world for centuries, because hidden behind the figure of the miraculous Christ, whom the ignorant though loving reverence of his followers created. In freeing Jesus from the supernatural halo of the wonder-worker, we are only following his own counsel.

V. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to make clear the conditions under which the oral tradition about Jesus was taking shape, before men came to make any written record. On the most conservative estimate thirty years elapsed between the death of Jesus and the writing of any one of our Gospels. Half a century is probably nearer the truth.
2. Show that the ascription of miracles to Jesus is but one instance of an almost universal practice.
3. Dwell on the profound truth of the lesson text as applied in its deepest sense to the historical Jesus.

VI. Questions.

1. Do the Gospels ascribe many miracles to Jesus? Why do they? Do other religious books do the same in the case of other great men?
2. What did Jesus think about miracles?
3. Wherein did the true greatness of Jesus lie?
4. Would the power to work wonders prove a man to be really great?

LESSON XIV.

JESUS AND THE PHARISEES.

(Matt. xxiii. 13–36.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 20.

RECALL to mind what was said about the Pharisees in lesson vi. Refer to passages like Luke xi. 37, John iii. 1, etc., which shew the friendly relation of the order to Jesus. Note the parable of the Pharisees and the publican, and what Jesus says of the elder brother in that of the Prodigal Son.

I. THE GOOD SIDE OF THE PHARISEES.

The Pharisees stood as no other party did for the best side of the religious life of Israel in the time of Jesus. They were full of the hope of the kingdom of God, and endeavoured by the strictest attention to every detail of the law to win over the nation to righteousness. The devoutest and most earnest souls in Israel belonged to their party and to that of the scribes, with whom they were closely allied. Men like Hillel and Schammai were scribes; Nicodemus was a Pharisee. They were neither selfish ascetics, like the Essenes, nor ecclesiastical worldlings, like the Sadducees. Among them, if anywhere, were to be found those who were likely to sympathise with the religious message of Jesus.

II. INTEREST AND FRIENDLINESS.

At the beginning of the Galilean ministry the new prophet excited their closest attention. Their hospitality was frequently offered to and accepted by Jesus. They perhaps fancied that he might ally himself with them; while he, on the other hand, cannot but have been drawn to them by their zeal and their earnestness. The picture of the elder brother probably refers to them, and shews us how even at a later date Jesus appreciated their good qualities. If we take the picture of Nicodemus, in the Fourth Gospel, as historical, this impression of their early attitude is deepened. Not all their faults ought to blind us to the fact that, at any rate at first, they were friendly to the eager young teacher of repentance and of the coming kingdom of God.

III. GROWING OPPOSITION.

As Jesus grew more conscious of the meaning of the message he had to deliver, and found the message of his predecessor inadequate, the friendly attitude of the Pharisees began gradually to give way to one of suspicion. There were two main factors in this change.

1. *Jesus' Attitude towards Sinners.*— The Pharisees were separatists. To avoid pollution in every form was their chief concern. The very presence of the ceremonially unclean brought a taint. "This multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed" fitly expresses their attitude. John's bearing towards "sinners" was not dissimilar. He stood on a height apart, whence he summoned them to repentance, or warned them of coming judgment. With Jesus it was different. He does not ever appear to have attached importance to ceremonial impurity; he understood too well the goodness of the common Galilean for that. And now, as his message begins to fill with love and hope for his fellows, he comes to mingle closely with those who most needed him.

He seems to have had more hope for the religious and social outcast than for the religious fossil. He becomes known, to the horror of the Pharisee, by the title which has won him his way to the heart of the world's need, "the friend of publicans and sinners." His associates are largely fishermen, to whom strict legal purity was practically impossible. He even sits at meat with a tax-gatherer and his friends. It was difficult for them to imagine a greater violation of all the religious sanctities.

2. *Jesus and the Sabbath.*— To the pious Jew the Sabbath law was of well-nigh supreme importance. For a religious teacher to disregard it, and yet remain on a friendly footing with those whose main aim was strict obedience to the law, was impossible. To Jesus, on the other hand, growing as he was towards the high principle of human need, the elaborateness of Sabbath ordinance becomes increasingly unimportant. He appears to have gone about doing good as usual. When the cry for help came, Sabbath or no Sabbath, he responded. He did not trouble to check his disciples for gathering corn as they passed through the cornfields. He crowned all his offences by declaring that the Sabbath was made to bless men, not to burden them with prohibitions. Thenceforward the Pharisees began to watch Jesus, and to drift gradually into bitter opposition. To Jesus, too, it is becoming clear that nothing is so utterly hostile at heart to the vital spirit of religion as the consecrated tradition which relies on an inspiration which is past.

IV. Jesus is Found Wanting.

From now on the profound and far-reaching influence of the weightiest religious class begins to tell against Jesus. The Pharisees follow and listen, but only to entrap him, and to bring him into open conflict with the law. On one point at least they are successful. On the great question of divorce they force him, going as usual to the very root of the matter, to declare himself in direct conflict with their sacred enactments. The breach is open, never to be healed. They would now fain prove him an impostor. Probably, knowing well his hatred of any pretence to miraculous power, they press him for a sign in proof of his being in truth the bearer of a message from God. He scornfully refuses, and gives them the opportunity they sought of declaring him no true prophet. Thenceforward they plot against his life in the interests of religion, while he, conscious now of their relentless opposition, exposes the hollowness of their religious pretensions in the scathing invective which is preserved for us in Matt. xxiii. 13–36. Finally they help to crucify him in the name of religion as an enemy of God and God's law. So it has ever been when the religion of pious tradition and authority has had in its power the living spirit of freedom and truth.

V. Questions.

1. Why did the Pharisees come to hate Jesus? Was his work really destructive of their religion?
2. Can you trace the work of the Pharisaic spirit in the time of Socrates and of the Reformation and in our own time? How can it alone be counteracted?
3. What were the main points at issue between Jesus and the Pharisees?
4. Do you think his final denunciation of them was justifiable?
5. How would the whole matter lead you to define religion?
6. How may reverence for a prophet of a prior time lead men to crucify the prophets of the present?

LESSON XV.

THE "SERMON ON THE MOUNT"—PART I.

(Matthew, chapters v., vi., vii.)

LESSON TEXT.—Jesus "taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."—MARK i. 22.

READ the passages in Matthew referred to, noting their style and general character. Compare them with the collection of the sayings of Jesus in Luke vi. 12–49. Find out whether anything similar occurs in Mark or in the Fourth Gospel.

I. THE GOSPEL PRESENTATIONS OF THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

In the Fourth Gospel what Jesus taught is presented to us in long connected discourses, centering round certain definite themes, and bearing evident marks of careful composition. It is pretty generally agreed that at any rate the form of these discourses is due to the writer of the Gospel and not to Jesus. The first three Gospels on the other hand present Jesus' teaching in the shape of short pithy sayings or of parables, simple incidents illustrative of the truths he proclaimed. After the death of Jesus these "words" were, during a considerable period, handed down orally from one to another. They seem gradually to have gathered in the different churches into little groups of sayings which may possibly in time have been used as part of the service. As the belief in the speedy return of Jesus in glory began to grow fainter, men commenced to write down these sayings and to form them into larger collections. One of such, written in Aramaic (the language of Jesus), and called the "Sayings (*logia*) of Matthew," was probably used by the writer of the Gospel which bears that name.

When we examine the chapters before us, they seem much more like a portion of some such collection of memorable words of the Master than a connected "sermon"; and such is probably the case. The occasions on which Jesus uttered the different sayings had long been forgotten, and the compiler of the Gospel finds a setting for the collection in the tradition which told how, early in his ministry, Jesus spoke to the multitude on a hill-top.

II. HOW JESUS TAUGHT.

It seems, not only from the earliest records of Jesus, but from the analogy of the prophets and of the Jewish teachers of Christ's time, as though the Master never accustomed himself to the elaboration and use of set discourses like the modern sermon. Comment rising naturally out of their daily experiences as he and the disciples went from village to village, the suggestion of the passing scene or incident framing itself in parable, formed the bulk of what Jesus taught, or at least the part of his teaching which men remembered long enough for it to be recorded. It seems only natural to suppose that each of the Beatitudes had at first some concrete application, and that the parables gained their first force from referring to incidents and persons present to the minds of his hearers. There is no flavour of the abstract statement of the school nor of the illustration borrowed to set forth a principle

about his teaching. The illustration crops up by the roadside; what it says to the Master's heart is the living word of God he speaks. An air of common life runs through all: as contrasted with the teaching of the professionally religious, it is secular; in comparison with the abstract dicta of the schools, it is alive and near. It was through the living, common, every-day things about him that truth came to Jesus. It went forth from him as simply as it came.

III. The Authority of His Teaching.

The sayings of the scribes were quotations; the words of Jesus expressed a living personal experience, verifiable in the experience of those about him and challenging verification. It was the pure heart behind a face fair with the vision of God that gave authority to the living word. Religion is not believing because the authorities say so, but because you have found out by actual trial that it is so. Then the authority is in yourself, and you can speak as one *having* authority. Jesus *was* what he taught.

IV. The Beatitudes.

A careful comparison of the "Sermon on the Mount," in Matthew, with the "Sermon on the Plain," in Luke, throws a good deal of light on the way in which the sayings of the Master were preserved in the oral tradition which bridged the half-century between the crucifixion and the earliest Gospel writing. "Blessed are the poor," "Blessed are ye that weep now," "Blessed are ye that hunger now," are the main differences among the Beatitudes. They are marked by a characteristic we may note elsewhere in Luke, a special sense of the evil of wealth (*e.g.*, Luke vi. 24).

The general principle this little collection of sayings suggests is that true happiness must come from within. It is not what you have but what you are that matters. It is not the frame that makes the picture. The secret of life is inwardness.

It is possible to find sayings in the bibles of other religions which are very like these sayings of Jesus. The Beatitudes are not true because Jesus uttered them. He found them to be true, as we may, by trying them. Their meaning will only be of value to us in so far as we bring them down on the level of our daily life. Jesus lived by these things.

V. Lesson Hints.

1. Make clear how it is that a collection of isolated sayings, which we sometimes have in two forms, comes to us as one long discourse.

2. Get at the fact that the teaching of Jesus did not have a specifically religious ring about it. It was more like conversation than preaching. Imagine incidents which may have given rise to the Beatitudes. Make the person of the teacher live and give reality to what he said. It was intensely real to him.

3. Distinguish clearly between the authority of consecrated tradition and that of truth. Why do you believe what you believe? What do you mean by the phrase?

4. Remember that Jesus was put to death as an irreligious person. Let that help to make clear what *his* religion was.

Note.—Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma" will be found useful. The conclusion of "Romola" is apropos. Carpenter's "Gospels" is invaluable.

LESSON XVI.

THE "SERMON ON THE MOUNT"—PART II.

(Matthew, chapters v., vi., vii.)

LESSON TEXT.—Jesus says, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."—JOHN vi. 63.

READ the prescribed passages, carefully noting the correspondence with, and differences from, the version in Luke vi. Keep in mind the suggestions of last lesson.

I. RELIGION THE SAVOUR OF LIFE (Matt. v. 13).

Salt is the enemy of corruption; the higher life prevents the foul unhealthfulness of the lower. Colossians iv. 6 suggests that religion is that which keeps life from being flat and stale. There is a freshness and appetising quality about life when it rises to its true level. Mark ix. 50 and Luke xiv. 34 appear to be reminiscences of this saying. Religion gives zest to life. It is the delight of *living* as *a man* may live.

II. JESUS AND THE LAW (Matt. v. 17–20).

The aim of religious teaching to Jesus was that which the law had in view,— righteousness; but his method of making life true, not from without but from within, was utterly opposed to every form of legalism. He was crucified as a law-breaker. The saying in verses 18, 19, like that in xxiii. 2, 3, is due to the fact that the first Christians were Jews, and did not at all understand how destructive of Judaism its fulfilment was.

III. THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART (Matt. v. 21–28).

A bad man may be a man of good deeds. Fear of exposure or punishment, and love of approbation, may keep men from doing evil who yet are radically bad men. To the law the righteous man is the man who keeps the commandments. To Jesus righteousness is obedience to an inner delight in truth. Be good; be your true self; delight in nobility of heart. Good deeds will then look after themselves. What one really is, lives for, rejoices in, is the important matter. Deeds that are truly fine are spontaneous. No man can be a good man who does not love goodness.

Note the lack of connection in this passage. The second half of verse 22 and verses 25 and 26 do not read like genuine sayings of Jesus.

IV. THE DUTY OF NON-RESISTANCE (Matt. v. 38–42; Luke vi. 27–30).

The lesson text shews us the way in which we may interpret these sayings. In a paradoxical form they impress upon us the true spirit of religion. Paul says this spirit does not insist on its rights. We should be more eager as to what we can give to others than as to what we can expect from them. To prevent, by main force, an assault on the defenceless, or to repel one in self-defence, to refuse to give to every one who asks of us, contradict the letter of these sayings, and yet may be quite in accord with the spirit it commends.

V. THE ENTHUSIASM OF HUMANITY (Matt. v. 43–48; Luke vi. 32–36).

The choicest zest of life, to Jesus, was to have such an

enthusiastic sense of brotherhood with others that not even their enmity could destroy it. He would have us see a comrade even in those who are most opposed to us; only so can we know the largeness of our own hearts and its joy. There is not reward enough in loving only those who love us.

VI. Real Life Carries a Divine Reward with It (Matt. vi. 1–18).

The credit which a reputation for religion brought, and it was very great in the time of Jesus, was to him not worth having. The inner reward of being true to one's best self, and therein to God, made it seem terribly empty. It is out of genuine compassion for the successful Pharisees that he says, "They have their reward." Goodness is its own reward. There is but one main reason for living as Jesus lived: you cannot in any other way make so much of life.

Note.—Refer to the words of Socrates in the Apology (chap. xxix.), where he tells his judges that it is not worth while to lose that unseen reward, even if one is to escape death thereby. Compare the familiar saying, "Death before dishonour." Mark the absurd "openly" at the end of verses 4, 6, and 12 in the A. V. Refer to Paul's experience (Phil. iii. 8, 9).

VII. The Narrow Gate (Matt. vii. 13, 14).

The way to life is hard at first,—self-denial, the rejection of many things that seem pleasant, the curbing of impulse, the giving up of what we call our own will for the sake of what is right and true. Only after a little do we find that this is the way whereby our own true life comes to perfect freedom. Doing just what is pleasant is easy at first, it makes a man at last a slave to his own basest.

Note.—The last clause of verse 14 does not mean that this way is only for the few (*cf.* verse 8), but is historical. Jesus looks around and says, "There are not many going in."

VIII. The Strength of Experience (Matt. vii. 24–27).

The authority to which Jesus appeals is that of human experience. If a man finds out that these things are true by living them, then the witness is in himself; and neither temptation nor disappointment can take from him what is an actual growth and enlargement of life itself. The truth a man assents to on the authority of another need never really become part of him. It may be displaced by any adverse circumstance. Jesus had found the power which the following of the nobler life brings. He says, Follow it for yourself and you too will find its truth. (Luke vi. 46–49. See Rom. xii. 2, where for "prove" read "find out by actual trial.")

IX. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to get the feeling that here we have memories of teaching which came right from the heart of life. Jesus is just telling his comrades the secret of splendid living as it becomes clear in his own experience.

2. Emphasise the note that all this teaching is animated by the delight of going below the surface of religion to its inmost heart,—from shadow to substance; form to reality; letter to spirit; tradition to truth, which is its own authority; enforced obedience to freedom.

3. Inwardness, reality, the liberty of noble living, are among the topics the lesson suggests. The lesson text suggests two more: "spirit" means inspiration; "life" is not merely comfortable existence.

LESSON XVII.

MESSENGERS FROM JOHN TO JESUS.

(Matthew, chapter xi. 2-19; Luke, chapter vii. 18-35.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 10.

READ the prescribed passages and compare them carefully with each other; pay particular attention to Luke vii. 21; refer to Luke xvi. 16, viii. 8, xiv. 35; note what Mal. iii. 1 really says. Look out Machærus on the map, and trace the route by which John's messengers went to Capernaum.

I. THE GOSPEL RECORDS.

The story of John's sending messengers from his prison to Jesus is found neither in Mark nor in the Fourth Gospel. The versions given in Matthew and Luke differ considerably from one another. In Luke vii. 21 Jesus performs miracles in the presence of the messengers, an evident later addition to the account in Matthew, where the answer of Jesus still bears marks of its original symbolical meaning. Verses 12-14 in Matthew's account are absent from Luke's, although the first two verses are found elsewhere in Luke in a different connection (Luke xvi. 16) and in a somewhat different form. Verse 15 in Matthew's version is found in Mark iv. 23 and Luke viii. 8, xiv. 35, but not as part of Jesus' answer to John. Verse 14 occurs nowhere in Luke, and seems to belong better to the occasion supplied by Matt. xvii. 10-13; Mark ix. 11-13. These facts make it only more clear that our Gospels are compiled from reminiscences of Jesus, as they were current long after his death.

II. THE IMPRISONED PROPHET'S QUESTION.

While Jesus was in the wilderness, Herod Antipas, probably fearing political disturbance, had caused John to be imprisoned in the gloomy fortress of Machærus, on the hills, some ten miles east of the Dead Sea (see map), in the extreme south of Peræa. His friends seem to have been allowed to see him, and doubtless brought him word that in Galilee a new prophet is preaching the near approach of God's kingdom. Full of a fiery hope that no imprisonment could dim, the Baptist sends to Jesus to ask if he is indeed the prophet whom God has sent to herald the immediate coming of the end. Possibly he felt doubtful of the quieter method of Jesus; possibly, chafing in confinement, he was eager to come into closer contact with the man who had so unexpectedly taken up his message and his work; of one thing we may be sure, there was no petty sense of jealousy in his question.

III. JESUS' ANSWER.

In answer to John's question, Jesus, full of those words of Isaiah in which he seems to have heard a summons to the calling of his life, says, "Tell John that I am but one of God's servants; that the blind are learning to see, and the deaf to hear; that life is coming to those who were dead; that good tidings are being preached to the poor" (Isa. lxi. 1-3, xxix. 18; Luke xv. 32; Eph. v. 14). It was a prophet's work, and Jesus was conscious of the prophet's call. Only day by day is it becoming clear to him that he is rising out of the message he had from John into something larger and more divine. John had been his teacher and is in prison. Jesus is breaking loose from his teaching. What

more can he say than he does, "Take heart, God's work is being done"?

In the form in which we now have the story, John's question seems to mean, "Art thou the Messiah?" and the answer of Jesus was looked upon as saying, "Yes." But the narratives have taken on this tone only under the later conviction that Jesus was the "Christ." Even if Jesus came to believe himself to be the Messiah (which is not certain), it is clear that he did not do so at this early period of his work.

IV. Jesus' Estimate of John.

How full of gratitude and reverence are the words which, as soon as the messengers are gone, Jesus uses of the man whose words had been to him God's summons. "*He* was no ease-loving spirit who bent before the storm. A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, more than a prophet. Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John."

It is probable that in the passages before us we find gathered together all that Jesus was remembered to have said about John. At any rate, the words "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" seem strangely out of place here, however true they may be as an utterance of Jesus on some other occasion.

V. Noteworthy Points.

1. In Matt. xi. 10 and Luke vii. 27 we have an instance of an O. T. passage altered in the New, to support an event in the Gospel narrative. In Mal. iii. 1 God is the speaker, and says, "I send my messenger before *my* face."

2. Matt. xi. 12 seems to be a saying of Jesus in which he cuts himself loose from every form of Messianic expectation which encouraged rebellion and looked for the overturn of the Roman dominion.

3. Josephus is our authority for saying that John was imprisoned in the fortress of Machærus. We do not know when or how it came into the hands of Herod Antipas.

4. The phrase "the son of man" (Matt. xi. 19; Luke vii. 34) is here looked upon as referring to the Messiah. Possibly Jesus did not use it in the instance before us; possibly he used it in a perfectly simple and non-Messianic sense.

VI. Lesson Hints.

1. Make the imprisonment of John real,—accustomed to the free, open life of the wilderness; eager, impatient, uncurbed; now imprisoned, cramped, powerless; an ignominious death before him.

2. Jesus loved John, the man whose passionate call had been God's voice to him. He is breaking loose from John's teaching. How can he send a reply which shall not discourage?

3. Let the words of Jesus about John throw light on what the baptism meant to Jesus.

VII. Questions.

1. How did this story come to us? What thought may have gradually helped to colour it?
2. Where was Machærus? Who owned it?
3. What does Jesus say about John? What did he owe to the Baptist?
4. In what sense is Matt. xi. 11 true? Is it in place here?
5. Have you any reason for thinking that Jesus' message to John is meant metaphorically? Do you remember an instance of such use from one of the parables, or in Paul's teaching?
6. How does the compiler of the third Gospel understand it?
7. Wherein was Jesus' thought of the kingdom of God different from that of the people of his time?

LESSON XVIII.

JESUS AND THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT.

(Luke, chapter vii. 36–50.)

LESSON TEXT.— Jesus was called "a friend of publicans and sinners."— MATT. xi. 19; LUKE vii. 34.

READ the story in Luke as referred to; compare it with Matt. xxvi. 6–13 and Mark xiv. 3–9; see also John xii. 1–8. Ask yourself the question whether these are different versions of one story or not.

I. JESUS THE FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

This title, which points more than any other to that in Jesus which has led men to call him "the Saviour of the world," was during his lifetime one of the main causes which brought upon him the hatred of the religious people of his time. Their attitude toward those who were outside the pale was that of scorn and disdain. Jesus felt that the one thing which was best worth doing was to try to inspire those who most needed it with the hope of that noble life of which in every man he saw the possibility. They were all to him children of his heavenly Father. The Pharisee was too anxious about his own personal sanctity to associate with the defiled. To keep *himself* unspotted from the world was his main aim. To Jesus purity was wholly purity of heart, and this purity was the eager desire to help and inspire and bless. As a result Jesus attracted to himself and made comrades of those from whom religious people kept aloof as a religious duty.

Chief among these were the publicans, those who had cut themselves off from the people of God by consenting, for gain, to help to exact from their fellows the taxes of the hated Roman. The "sinners" were those who by their life had cut themselves off from a religion which concerned itself much with imposing penalties on all who did not keep the law, and had little thought of helping them to better things. Religiously, socially, morally, both were hopeless outcasts. For all such Jesus had only compassion and hope. The result was that a tax-gatherer became one of the chosen few round the person of the Master, and that the morally desperate found in him the power of a love that was able to forgive and renew. As he himself ironically says, he had not come to call *the righteous*, but sinners.

II. THE PHARISEE HOST.

At first, as we have seen in the lesson on the Pharisees, that body of men, zealous for righteousness as they conceived it, were interested in the new teacher. They perhaps thought that he might come to ally himself with them, and he on the other hand must have been attracted by the undoubted earnestness of many of them. The story before us tells of one of the occasions on which he was willing to accept the proffered hospitality of one of them. Utterly incapable of understanding the simple reality and inwardness of the religion of Jesus, he was yet probably a good man of the formal type, and felt that he was doing a meritorious act in being willing to learn what the new teacher had to say.

III. The Story.

Possibly some of the details of the narrative have been added to or changed as it passed from one to another during the long years during which tradition was the only record of the events of Jesus' life. Possibly it owes somewhat to the other similar incidents at Bethany and in the house of Simon the leper. The main outline is clear.

Jesus is reclining at table, as was customary, leaning on his elbow, his feet stretched out behind him. The chamber was open to the street. During the meal a woman, one of the lowest social class, to whom he had probably before spoken some kind word of encouragement, came quietly in behind him, and as a token of gratitude and reverence anointed his feet with scented oil. The Pharisee waits angrily for Jesus to repel such a contaminating familiarity. Jesus reads his thoughts. There is love here and gratitude beyond any you know of, he says; she may have sinned much, but hers is no hopeless case, there is much love in her heart. Then, turning to the woman, he sends her away with words of kindest inspiration and hope. It was thus that Jesus gave new strength to those who were weighed down by the past wrong of their lives.

The indignation of the righteous Pharisee cannot easily be imagined. He could not understand a religion to which the sacred religious ideas of the past meant so little, in comparison with the call of human need for kindly help.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to make clear that the attitude of the Pharisee was that expected of all pious people in the time of Jesus. He was, if the story means anything, better rather than worse than the average of his class. In condemning the man, Jesus condemns rather the religion than the individual.

2. Picture to yourself the power Jesus' attitude towards them must have had on those for whom no other religious teacher had ever had one word of hope. Invent some suggestion of that intercourse of Jesus with the woman beforehand which our story presupposes but says nothing of.

3. Make clear that what was wrong with religion, as the Pharisee knew it, was that it was selfish; that it concerned itself with the outside of life, and not with life itself; that its conception of what God had enjoined was unrelated to the good of man. That in turn will make clear what the main advance in the teaching and religion of Jesus was.

4. Illustrate as far as possible by reference to modern instances.

V. Questions.

1. Imagine and describe a modern Pharisee.
2. What were the good points of the one in the story?
3. What would he have said to the woman if he had said what he felt to be the proper thing under the circumstances?
4. What would the result on the woman have been? What may have been the result of the method of Jesus?
5. When any one enables you to feel that all the wrong in you cannot hold you down if you set yourself toward better things, can he be said to give you the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins? Does that suggest what Jesus meant by the phrase?
6. Can any one who thinks only evil of you truly help you?

LESSON XIX.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

(Matthew xiii. 1-23; Mark iv. 1-20; Luke viii. 4-15.)

LESSON TEXT.—"An honest and good heart."—LUKE viii. 15.

READ and compare the above passages, using Mark as the standard. Note specially what is said about Jesus' reason for teaching in parables, and refer to Isa. vi. 9, 10, by way of explanation.

I. THE GOSPEL VERSIONS.

This parable occurs in all three synoptics. The accounts vary considerably in details of phrase and colouring, but not at all as to the essential structure of the narrative. It is interesting to piece the three accounts together so as to preserve those touches peculiar to each. The parables, perhaps the most characteristic feature of the teaching of Jesus as presented by the first three gospels, are entirely wanting in the fourth. This corroborates what has been already said as to the relation of the fourth to the other three gospels. The first three preserve for us the historical tradition about Jesus as it was current about half a century after his death. The fourth gospel is a later presentation of the life and teaching of Jesus under the formative influence of certain philosophical ideas as to his nature and mission.

II. WHY JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES.

In the accounts before us it seems as though the writers imagined that Jesus used parables so that the multitude might not really understand his meaning, that being reserved for certain private teaching to the disciples (*e.g.*, Mark iv. 11, 12). In making this explanation Jesus is said to have used the words of Isa. vi. 9, 10 (Matt. xiii. 14, 15). When we turn to Isaiah, we find that the passage means, "The Lord hath sent me to preach; and, from the reception my message finds, it is as though he had sent me only that the people should be made deaf to my words." In some such similar sense Jesus may have referred the saying to himself and the failure of his message to make any real impression on his hearers. That this was the intention of Jesus and the reason of his using parables is absurd. He used them simply because thereby, best of all, he could convey his meaning to the people. We read in "In Memoriam" that

> "Truth in closest words shall fail,
> When truth embodied in a tale
> Shall enter in at lowly doors."

Of all forms of teaching, the language of illustration or parable is most easily understood. This is specially true of oriental races, like the hearers of Jesus.

III. THE SCENE AND THE PARABLE.

Although the parable reads as if it were one told privately to the disciples, to explain the reception the message of the gospel found among the hearers of Jesus, yet it is not impossible that the tradition may be correct in giving it its present setting. More

people than usual have gathered round the boats to hear Jesus. He gets into one of the little fishing-craft just afloat, and speaks to the villagers gathered close to him. Some are sitting on the rocks, some perhaps mending their nets or setting their lines in order, others intent only on hearing the teacher. The village rabbi may be there, and one or two of the better class from Tiberias, standing on the outskirts of the little group. On the hillside beyond a man is sowing. Jesus draws attention to him. "How much seed is lost, some on the hard path across the field, some where the soil is shallow, some next the fence, only to be choked by thorns and undergrowth. Only a part falls into the good ground and bears fruit at last." Jesus is the sower, his words the seed, the people about him the field,— some too hard, some too shallow, some too intensely interested in less worthy matters to be able to open the honest and good heart to wise counsel, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Note that stony ground is first-rate soil. What is here meant is ground where in places the rock below comes close to the surface, a matter common enough in hill-farming. See R.V.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Make the whole scene graphic. Above all, try to feel the simple directness and reality of the teaching of Jesus. Let your imagination supply details. Whose boat was it? Where was Peter? What was he doing? Would the little gathering know whose the field was, and who the man who was sowing? etc.

2. Let the four classes of hearers be present to the eye of the great teacher. A hard, proud, self-satisfied Pharisee, impervious to any simple truth which did not echo the commonplaces of the schools, might stand for the hard, trodden path. One of the excitable Galileans, quick in temperament but with no depth of nature, the hard rock of utter selfishness under a thin cover of religious excitability, might represent the "rocky ground." A successful busy man from Tiberias, stopping for a moment to listen, suggests the seed that fell among the thorns. Perhaps the disciple whom Jesus loved was in the Master's thought when he spoke of the honest and good heart.

Make the instances modern. A hard man, hard and cynical by repression of his better self; an excitable revival convert, glad to be made to feel that he is "saved," finding it easy to slip into the old, easy selfishness as soon as the froth has gone off his excitement; the man who has no time to be religious; the honest and good heart, that brings forth with patience the fruit of noble strength and fine character, may serve as suggestions.

3. Make "the word" concrete. The plain counsel of the Bible, the influence of noble example, the regret which follows our mistakes, the lessons of our own experience and of that of others, the inner reward of obedience to our real selves, are some of the ways in which the divine word comes.

V. Questions.

1. How many people had gathered round Jesus when he began to speak? Who were they? Describe the scene.
2. Why did Jesus use parables so much? What is a parable? What does Tennyson say about "truth embodied in a tale"?
3. Tell the story of the sower. Has it any application to you?
4. Is all truth the word of God? Does living a religious life mean anything more than living wisely in obedience to all that human experience can teach us? Is not a man foolish who neglects that teaching, or fancies that God will make an exception in his case?

LESSON XX.

JESUS SENDING OUT HIS DISCIPLES TO PREACH.

(Matthew x. 1-42; Mark vi. 7-13; Luke ix. 1-6; x. 1-20.)

LESSON TEXT.—"It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."—MATT. x. 20.

READ the lesson passages; compare Matthew's account of the sending of the twelve (Matt. x. 13-15) with Luke's story of the sending of the seventy (Luke x. 10, etc.). Ask throughout whether Jesus' counsel to the disciples is historically probable. Refer also to 1 Cor. ix. 14; Mark iii. 14; and Luke xxii. 35.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

All three synoptics tell us of the sending out of the twelve to declare the coming of the kingdom. When we remember how little the disciples understood of the meaning of the message of Jesus (*e.g.*, Matt. xvi. 23; Mark x. 37), we begin to hesitate; and our hesitation is not much relieved by a careful examination of the records. They differ greatly from one another, and, even on points where they are agreed, read as though they recorded what men felt must have been rather than what actually happened. Matt. x. 14, 15 (Mark vi. 11) is not in accord with the long-suffering kindness of Jesus. Matt. x. 17-23 seems to refer to conditions which were familiar in the early church, but were quite beyond the horizon during the Galilean ministry. Verse 23 echoes the belief of his followers rather than the thought of Jesus. Luke, moreover, gives us the saying about Sodom and Gomorrah in connection with a narrative of the sending out of *seventy*. The fourth gospel is silent as to the whole matter.

On the other hand, Paul bears witness to the sending out of the disciples; and there are other references to it in both Mark and Luke. Moreover, it was customary for an itinerant teacher to have an inner circle of scholars, who helped him in his work.

Probably Jesus sought the help of his followers in widening the circle reached by his message. He may even have sent them out on some special missionary enterprise, when his words of counsel ran somewhat as in the short account in Mark vi. 8-10. In that case they seem soon to have returned, and their mission does not leave a mark on the record. The systematic sending out of the twelve either singly or in pairs, with detailed instructions such as we have in Matthew, or the mission of the seventy in Luke, are echoes of the missionary age of the first churches thrown back around the person of the Master.

II. THE SENDING OUT OF THE DISCIPLES.

The effort on the part of the followers of Jesus to carry the good news of the kingdom to the world was born after the death of their Master. Then, as it were by the contagion of his spirit, and as the full sense of what he had done for them came to be realised, they eagerly welcomed others into the brotherhood which had first been born in the fellowship of the disciples round the

person of Jesus. Before long the "enthusiasm of humanity" carried the message, though not without opposition on the part of the apostles themselves, beyond the limits of Judaism, and in the person of Paul set itself the task of winning the world for God. It is in this sense that Jesus most truly sent out his followers into the world, by filling them with a love for others which could find no rest while their brethren remained in the dark slavery of ignorance and sin. It was his power to create love of men in the hearts of his followers, rather than any specific instructions he gave them, that has given "the religion of humanity" to the world.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. It is remarkable that, when our gospels were compiled, there was no certainty as to the composition of "the twelve." As to eleven all was clear. Matthew gives Lebbæus for the twelfth; Mark gives Thaddæus; Luke and Acts say Judas the son of James. How strongly an uncertainty of this kind supports the conclusion that we look at the times of Jesus only through a haze of tradition, which sometimes conceals almost as much as it reveals!

Early in the history of the gospels the words "whose surname was Thaddæus" were inserted after "Lebbæus" in Matt. x. 3. Other MSS. wrote "Thaddæus," which came in time to be the accepted reading. (Compare carefully Matt. x. 2–4, A.V. and R.V.; Mark iii. 14–19; Luke vi. 13–16; Acts i. 13, 14.)

2. Matt. x. 5 throws light on the opposition which the first church at Jerusalem had to Paul's work among the Gentiles. The disciples seem to have considered that the message of the Christ was only for Jews and Jewish proselytes (those who were converted to Judaism). Whether Jesus himself thought so or not is at any rate open to question.

3. "The end," in Matt. x. 22, probably refers to the second coming, which the Christians of the first century believed would take place during the lifetime of some of the companions of Jesus. The next verse reflects the same belief (Mark ix. 1, xiii. 26; Luke ix. 27; Acts i. 11).

4. Matt. x. 32, 33 sounds strangely from the lips of the author of the Sermon on the Mount, where "before men" is the reiterated mark of condemnation (Matt. vi. 1, 2, 5, 16).

5. What do you think of Matt. x. 15 as the words of Jesus as to the fate of the little village by the lake where the common people heard him gladly? Contrast Matt. xxiii. 37–39.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Dwell on the fact that it was the spirit of love to men, and the new delight of living in the hope-filled creative power of a new enthusiasm which they had caught from the Master, which made his followers the founders of the great missionary church.

2. Interpret the lesson text in the light of this fact. The voice of a divine life within gave their message its power.

V. Questions.

1. Does the gospel record sometimes take on its colour from the thought of the times out of which it sprang? How does that influence us in estimating its strict historical value?
2. Do we know exactly who the "twelve" were?
3. Was the work of Jesus a message or the influence of a life? Refer to the parable of the leaven.
4. What gospel tells us of the sending out of the seventy?
5. In what sense are we sent to carry God's message to the world?

LESSON XXI.

JESUS AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

(John v. 1-18.)

Lesson Text.— "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."—2 Cor. iii. 6.

Read the account of the incident, noting particularly the differences between the authorised and the revised versions.

I. The Narrative.

The fourth gospel, as we saw in the last lesson, was written after the others and under the influence of the thought of Jesus as the incarnation of the divine wisdom (Prov. viii. 22–31), or "word" (John i. 1–3, 14). The ministry in John extends over three years, and is spent almost equally in Judea and in Galilee. In the other gospels, on the other hand, the ministry of Jesus lasts about a year, and is confined to Galilee until the mission to Jerusalem, which ends with the crucifixion. As an historical authority, the fourth gospel is now pretty generally ranked below the three others. According to them there is no place for the incident of our lesson, which is represented as occurring at a second visit to Jerusalem.

The statement that the incident happened at "the feast" or "a feast" of the Jews seems unlike the narration of a definite historical event. The variations, too, as to the name of the place, Bethesda or Bethsaida or Bethzatha, suggest that no real incident is in the writer's mind. It is, at best, a somewhat uncertain tradition, which is used to introduce a discourse of a philosophico-theological character, which bears little likeness to the simple, concrete teaching of Jesus. When, too, one examines the story closely, one cannot but notice that the incident and the discourse do not correspond. In the incident the sin against the Sabbath consists in Jesus' having bidden the man take up his bed and walk. But, from v. 17 and vii. 21, 23, it is clear that the act of healing, itself, is the ground of the Jews' anger.

II. The Meaning of the Story.

When we come to ask how such an incident arose, we are met by many difficulties. The difficulty as to the place, probably the reason of the substitution of the other names given above, suggests that the name may be allegorical. Beth hesda means "house of mercy," and has with its five courts been referred to the temple with its five divisions, as symbolical of the religion of the law with its five books. The age of the man corresponds to the thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness, which the Jewish commentators had interpreted as signifying the time during which mankind waits for the coming of the Messiah. The sick man may thus be looked upon as a figure of the impotent religion of the Jews, finding no healing in the law till the true source of healing comes in Jesus, the redeemer of his people. In spite of all, there were still Jews who rejected him because he did his Father's work on

the Sabbath. Whether we consider some such explanation as sufficient to explain the origin of the story or not, the use of the incident as allegory may help us, as the lesson text suggests, to find teaching in the tale.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. There is no means of deciding what the feast was. All manner of conjectures have of course been made. The best reading (R.V.) leaves the matter wholly indefinite. *The* feast would be the feast of tabernacles.

2. The modern identifications of Bethesda and the "sheep gate" rest wholly upon the narrative before us, and therefore ought not to be used to support it.

3. The last clause of verse 3 and the whole of verse 4 are a later insertion, shewing how, even after the reception of the gospel into the use of the church, alterations came to be made. The correction removes from the story the supernatural element of the angel's coming down to trouble the waters. (See R.V.)

4. In spite of the view of one or two authorities who would translate it simply "withdrew," the expression "conveyed himself away," in verse 13, seems to refer to some exercise of supernatural power on the part of Jesus.

5. Note in verse 17 the reason Jesus gives for not ceasing to work on the Sabbath. It is as if he said, God does not keep the Sabbath, and therefore I need not.

6. As not unfrequently happens in the fourth gospel, the long discourse (verses 19–47) has no real relation to the matter in hand. Compare the apparent continuation of the conversation with Nicodemus in chapter three.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Taking the story literally, let it speak to us, as it has to generation after generation, of the tender, compassionate spirit of Jesus. No thought of himself ever held him back from response to an appeal for help.

2. Let it mirror for us the experience of all those to whom healing has come through the power of that noble life. Cannot we all say with Whittier in his noble poem "Our Master"?—

> "The healing of his seamless dress
> Is by our beds of pain;
> We touch him in life's throng and press,
> And we are whole again."

3. Let the lesson text and the allegorical meaning suggested for the story remind us that true health can only be from within; that religion is not a matter of observances, of sacrifices or sacraments or services, nor a matter of conforming to the strictest code of duty, but only the quickening of true nobility of life. Learn so to live as to rejoice in living. Be true to the real self, whom Jesus would have grow in us to all its joyous strength.

V. Questions.

1. Name some of the differences between the fourth gospel and the other three.
2. What historical weight has our narrative? Give your reasons.
3. Suggest an allegorical interpretation for it.
4. What lessons may it teach us?

LESSON XXII.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Matthew xiv. 1-12; Mark vi. 14-29; Luke ix. 7-9.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."—MATT. x. 28.

READ the above selections from the gospels. Recall what was said in lesson seventeen, as to the imprisonment of John. Look out Tiberias and Machærus on the map.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

All three of the synoptics tell us of the imprisonment of John by Herod, and that Herod beheaded him. Matthew and Mark alone picture to us the dramatic scene at the banquet, where Salome asks for the head of John. The fourth gospel merely mentions his imprisonment (John iii. 24).

When we come to examine the parallel narratives in Matthew and Mark, it is difficult to determine whether we are dealing with history or with the dramatic elaboration of popular tradition. We have already seen in lesson seventeen that John's denunciation of Herod's marriage with Herodias is not the reason which Josephus gives for the imprisonment of the prophet. So also in this case. Josephus traces the murder of John in prison to Herod's fear of a political rising. Here it is the result of a court intrigue on the part of Herodias. The place is doubtful. Mark seems to have in mind a feast at the palace of Herod in Tiberias (Mark vi. 21). But John was imprisoned in Machærus, one hundred miles away, which would render the bringing in of the head in a charger immediately after the request impossible. Salome, moreover, the daughter of Herodias, was at this time the wife or possibly the widow of Philip, while the narratives suggest a young girl still under a mother's control (Matt. xiv. 8; Mark vi. 24). It also seems improbable that Herod should hold a birthday feast at Machærus. On the other hand, the intense dramatic power of the scene is in favour of its truth.

The course of events may have been that Herod, fearing a popular rising, imprisoned John. Later, when the teaching of Jesus is beginning to attract attention, and he hears that messengers are passing between the two great leaders, the crafty tetrarch may have had John beheaded as a precautionary measure. The action of Jesus, in Matt. xiv. 13, seems to imply something of this sort. In Matt. xvii. 12, also, Jesus seems to attribute John's death, at any rate in part, to the scribes, which confirms this suggestion.

II. THE STORY.

The picture is intensely dramatic. Herod fears to put John to death. Herodias, accustomed to use Herod as her tool, is determined to have her prophet accuser killed. At the birthday feast her daughter Salome is sent in to charm Herod by her dancing. When, as her reward, she asks for the head of the

Baptist in a charger, Herod feels that he has been trapped, but dare not go back. The head of the man whose nobility and strength had awed him is brought in, and given to the little dancing girl. But Herod is afraid. When he hears of Jesus, he says, "This is John the Baptist."

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. It is an interesting mark of the thought-atmosphere of the times in which our gospel records arose that people say of Jesus almost instinctively, as a perfectly natural explanation, that he is John risen from the dead. (See also Matt. xvi. 14, etc.)

2. Mark makes Salome the daughter of Herod (Mark vi. 22), and calls her "his daughter Herodias." Matthew calls the girl "the daughter of Herodias." The name Salome is given us by Josephus. She is the daughter of Herodias and Herod's step-brother.

NOTE.— The reading given on the margin of Mark vi. 22, R.V., is without doubt the genuine one. The correction to "the daughter of Herodias," which stands in the text, is one which was made at an early date, but is not from the compiler of the gospel.

3. Death by beheading was peculiarly revolting to the Jews.

4. The word translated "damsel," in Matt. xiv. 11 and Mark vi. 22, 28, could not be applied to a married woman, the wife of a governor. This makes the statement made on general grounds in paragraph one perfectly clear.

IV. LESSON HINTS.

1. Contrast the strength of John with the weakness of Herod. The tetrarch outwardly is a monarch, and John only a poor prisoner, over whom he has the power of life and death. In reality it is John who is the king, over whom Herod has no power at all, and the tetrarch is the prisoner, full of every uncertainty and fear. Refer to the lesson text.

NOTE.— Refer to Plato's account of Socrates's address to those who in the end condemned him to death, in the "Apology," for an illustration of this point. Among other things he says, "A bad man is not permitted to injure a better than himself," "Know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man." Turn also to the famous passage, Rom. viii. 31-39.

2. Discuss the question whether Herod was right in holding to his oath. Is it always right to be consistent? May it not be sometimes the nobler course to go back on what you have said, and to declare that it is not right for you to do even what you had promised? Shakespeare says that "vows to every purpose must not hold," and again,—

> "It is great sin to swear unto a sin;
> But greater sin to keep a sinful oath."

3. Dwell on the effect of the news of the murder of John on Jesus. This would have special weight if, as has been suggested, John's death was but the first step toward crushing Jesus, and brought about by fear of a revolt which the two great teachers might together head.

V. QUESTIONS.

1. Give the gospel account of the death of John. What other is suggested by Josephus? Name difficulties in the way of either.
2. In what ways did the murder of John affect Jesus?
3. What may the lesson teach us?
4. Is it ever worth while to do wrong?

LESSON XXIII.

JESUS IN EXILE.

(Matthew xv. 21–28; Mark vii. 24–30.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."—JOHN x. 16.

READ the above passages carefully, contrasting them with the lesson text and with what you know of the spirit of Jesus. Find on a map the "borders of Tyre and Sidon," Phœnicia, Cæsarea Philippi, Mount Hermon. Refer to the first two paragraphs of chapter vii. in Mr. Carpenter's "Gospels."

I. THE TWO VERSIONS OF THE STORY.

It is found only in Mark and Matthew. Between their accounts there are many discrepancies. Mark's is, on the whole, simpler and slightly more brief. In Matthew the tone is harsher, and more pressure is required to overcome the prejudice of Jesus. He, apparently, is not thought to have entered Phœnicia; for the woman "comes out" to him "from those borders." The woman is called a Canaanite, and addresses him, curiously enough, as the "Son of David." These points do not tell us anything decisive as to the relation of the two narratives.

II. ITS HISTORICAL VALUE.

It cannot be determined what basis of fact lies beneath these accounts. They bear marks of the bitter controversy as to whether the gospel was for the Gentiles or only for the Jews. Their intolerant spirit seems to belong to that conflict in the church rather than to the Jesus of history. The healing of the daughter at a distance calls for stronger evidence. On the other hand, we hardly seem justified in regarding the whole matter, as the "Bible for Learners" does, as a product of the discussion. No sufficient motive appears in the story.

The journey to the "borders of Tyre and Sidon" seems historical. Some incident of the healing of a heathen by Jesus may have formed the nucleus for narratives which have, in the telling, taken on the spirit and thoughts of the days when, far and wide, the Jewish party set itself to counteract the more generous spirit of Paul (Gal. i. 7, iv. 17, v. 8–12; 2 Cor. xi. 1–5, etc.).

NOTE.—The early followers of Jesus were all Jews. At first they believed that the gospel was for Jews only, and that the ordinances of Judaism were obligatory upon all who accepted Jesus the Jewish Messiah. Again and again we find that the work of Paul is being hindered by emissaries of this party, although they had officially had to concede to him the right to preach the gospel to the heathen. (See next lesson.)

III. WHY JESUS LEFT PALESTINE.

The journey to Phœnicia marks a crisis in the history of Jesus. The Pharisees, the most popular and respected leaders in matters of religion, have set themselves against him. Curiosity has been satisfied, and his popularity is on the wane. Herod has been aroused and has put John the Baptist to death. It is no longer safe for Jesus to remain in Galilee. He must have time to face the new conditions. The hour of popularity is over. A dark

shadow of defeat, and even death, has arisen. The master goes to Peræa, to Phœnicia, then to Cæsarea Philippi, not on missionary journeys, but seeking seclusion and waiting for the right way. At length he draws from his few followers the sublime confession of Mark viii. 29 (Matt. xvi. 16; Luke ix. 20), and sets his face toward Jerusalem, to make his final appeal to God's people as they gather in the holy city at the feast of the passover. The buoyant gladness of the Galilean ministry is over. The end is becoming clear, and a deeper strength and tenderness mark the work of Jesus.

NOTE.—We have reached the second period of Jesus' active career. The first is that of his glad ministry in Galilee; the second, the time when gathering opposition on the part of the authorities alienates his hearers and drives Jesus across the border. The third comprises the journey to Jerusalem and his final work there.

IV. WHAT WAS JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GENTILES?

The question springs at once out of our lesson. It cannot be answered with certainty. The universalism of Paul and the fourth gospel were only implicit in Jesus. On the other hand, he was far more free than his followers in his relation to the religion of his time, and his sympathies were wider than any class or race limits. He probably regarded his mission as one to his own people. The question of its extension beyond them simply did not arise. While Jesus lived, it was still below the horizon. On the other hand, it is clear that the reference to all who were not Jews as "dogs" belongs to that bitter spirit in his followers which was so conspicuously absent from their master. The words of the author of the fourth gospel in our lesson text are a far safer guide to the temper of Jesus.

V. LESSON HINTS.

1. Make the crisis clear. Realise what it must have meant for Jesus and how it must have altered the whole future for him; how different it all looked when hope ran high, and the people gathered from far and near to hear the glad message, and even the Pharisees were friendly.

2. Bring out the Jewish hatred of all save the chosen people. Mark how it opposed Paul when he wished to carry the gospel outside those limits. Note that the spirit and teaching of Jesus were necessarily fatal to all such narrowness as soon as the question arose.

3. Make clear from Paul's letter to the Galatians (see passages referred to above) that following in his steps came Jewish Christian teachers who, in spite of the agreement referred to in Gal. ii. 9, 10, tried to persuade Paul's converts that they were bound as followers of Jesus to observe the Jewish law, and quoted the apostles as their authority.

VI. QUESTIONS.

1. Do you think this story, as it stands, is historical? If not, why not?
2. Under whose jurisdiction was Jesus when he crossed the border of Galilee on the way toward Tyre? Why did he leave? Are there more reasons than one?
3. Is there anything in the Sermon on the Mount which runs counter to the prejudice of our lesson story (*e.g.*, Matt. v. 44)? Were the first followers of Jesus merely a Jewish sect? Who did most to break down such a limitation? Was his teaching in accord with the spirit of Jesus?

LESSON XXIV.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

(Matthew xvii. 1-9; Mark ix. 2-9; Luke ix. 28-36.)

LESSON TEXT.—"The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—2 COR. iv. 6.

READ in addition to the above 2 Cor. iii. 7—iv. 6. Refer also to Ex. xxiv. 1, 2, 16; xxxiv. 29-35. Consult, if possible, the chapter on "The Transfiguration" in Mr. Carpenter's "Gospels." The reference to the subject in the last part of the "Bible for Learners" (chapter iii., on "Stephen and Philip") is also good.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

There is no mention of the transfiguration in the fourth gospel. Among the synoptics the simplest and shortest account is that found in Mark. The narrators in the others seem to regard the matter rather as an historical incident than as allegory, and incorporate with their narrative little touches which cannot well be explained on any other ground. As regards place, the least indefinite statement is in Luke, where "the mountain" is spoken of. In the same gospel we find the statement that the disciples were heavy with sleep; and the subject of the conversation between Moses, Elias, and Jesus is given. Matthew adds, probably owing to some reminiscence of the baptism narratives, "in whom I am well pleased" to the words of the voice out of the cloud, tells us that the disciples fell on their faces when they heard the voice, and lay prostrate till Jesus came and touched them, bidding them arise, and transfers the statement that "they were sore afraid," which appears elsewhere in Mark, to this portion of the narrative. Matthew and Luke are but later and more elaborate forms of the earlier version in Mark, to which, accordingly, we turn our attention.

There have been many explanations of the story. Those who are pledged to the inspired accuracy of the gospels are of course obliged to regard the matter as historical. To others it has been a dream or even a "waking vision," whatever that may mean. Shadows of the disciples thrown by a low sun on the clouds have been made to do duty for the Moses and Elias of the story, or two friends of Jesus who had come to keep an appointment with him have been mistaken in the dim light for supernatural visitors.

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE ACCOUNT IN MARK.

In the early church the great matter of controversy, running through the Pauline letters, is the question whether the law supersedes the law or is but a crowning addition to it. The first church, at Jerusalem, and the apostles, of whom Peter, James, and John seem to have been the foremost at first, admitted none but Jews to their fellowship. They looked upon the gospel as standing alongside of and supplementing the law and the prophets. They still regarded the law as binding, as regards circumcision and the keeping of the Sabbath and the feasts, for instance. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah; he is made to say, "Not one jot . . . shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Under Paul's vigorous leadership it came at length to be seen that, while law and prophets might have been preparatory, they were superseded when Jesus set up his kingdom. His message, filling him, like Moses of old, with the light of a divine glory, was to set men free from the old covenant of the letter and lead them into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

When, with such things in mind and passages like 2 Cor. iii. before us, we turn to our story, it cannot but occur to us that here we in picture form the record of this great transition. As a sublime radiance shone from the face of Moses at the giving of the old covenant, so the disciples saw the light of the new covenant shining as the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (lesson text). Peter and James and John would fain have remained where Moses and Elias stood side by side with Jesus; but the heavenly message came, "This is my beloved son: hear him." From thenceforth they "saw no man any more save Jesus only." When we remember that Moses and Elias stand for the law and the prophets, the allegorical nature of the narrative seems self-evident. It does not tell us anything about the life of Jesus, but embodies in a tale the story of the struggle for freedom in the early church.

Some of the suggestions for the picture can still be traced to their sources. The opening sentence at once carries us back to Ex. xxiv. 1, where Moses and his three followers go up to Mount Sinai. The cloud that overshadowed, and was the sign of the divine presence, is a familiar feature in the pictures of the old dispensation. The shining raiment is from the book of Enoch, well known in the first century and referred to in Jude 14. See also Ex. xxiv. 15-18; Num. xii. 5, etc.

III. Lesson Hints.

1. Make perfectly clear the distinction between the modified Judaism, for which at first Peter and men like him stood, and the Christianity of Paul. Remember that, if it had not been for Paul, the religion of Jesus might have remained that of a Jewish sect. Be a Jew, obey the law, accept Jesus as the Messiah, said the one. Be a man, a freeman through the power of God in Jesus, the head of our humanity, said the other. See especially Paul's letter to the Galatians; *e.g.*, ii. 11–16; iii. 1–3; iv. 8–11, etc.

2. Try to realise how the story of the struggle and its outcome in the supremacy of the religion of the spirit of kindness came to be phrased symbolically, and at length grew into a narrative like that in Matthew or Luke.

3. The lesson text suggests that the power of the truth which Jesus taught was that of personal character, and was made more easy by the bond of personal loyalty to him. In "Janet's Repentance" George Eliot says: "Ideas are poor ghosts. . . . But sometimes they are clothed in a living human soul. . . . Then their presence is a power." See the whole passage.

IV. Questions.

1. How do the accounts of this incident differ? Which is the simplest?
2. What explanations of the story have been given? What do you think of them? Does any one take the story as representing actual fact? Why?
3. Can you explain the origin of the story in any other way?
4. What was the first great division in the church, as to which Paul "withstood Peter to the face"?
5. What does our lesson text mean? How does the fourth gospel understand this "glory" (John i. 14, last clause)?
6. Explain clearly "The religion of Jesus is the religion of spirit."
7. Do you know anything about the transfiguration of Buddha? (See Carpenter.)

LESSON XXV.

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

(Matthew xviii. 1–14; Mark ix. 33–50; Luke ix. 46–50.)

LESSON TEXT —"Whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all."— MARK x. 44 (Matt. xx. 27; Luke xxii. 26; Matt. xxiii. 11).

READ the passages referred to above, noting particularly the features peculiar to each. Refer also to Matt. xxiii. 11; Luke xxii. 26; Matt. x. 40; Luke xvii. 2; Luke xv. 3–7, for sayings which occur in our lesson, but are in these passages given in another connection. Abbott's "Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels" will be found useful.

I. THE NARRATIVES.

The passages containing this lesson are a very good illustration of what has been said as to the origin of the gospels, for it is evident that each record here is a separate form of the later tradition about the words of Jesus when he took a little child as a lesson to the disciples on their disputing as to who should be the greatest.

There is discrepancy as to the place. In Luke it happens "when they were come down from the mountain" (of transfiguration). In Matthew and Mark it is in a house at Capernaum.

The saying in Mark ix. 35 is given elsewhere in Matthew and Luke. The second half of verse 37 is found in Matt. x. 40. Matt. xviii. 4, 5, is peculiar to this gospel. Mark ix. 38–41 is found in Luke and not in Matthew. Mark ix. 42–47 is found in Matthew but not in Luke, although Luke gives part of it in another connection. Mark ix. 49, 50, is wanting in both Matthew and Luke, though it is possibly another form of the sayings in Matt. v. 13 and Luke xiv. 34. Matt. xviii. 10–14 is not found in Mark, though the little parable of the lost sheep is found in Luke xv. 3–7.

Various sayings of Jesus are evidently here collected together by the compilers of the gospels, a fact which is further borne out by the evident lack of connection in the different narratives.

II. THE INCIDENT.

The disciples, failing to apprehend the thought of Jesus as to the nature of his kingdom, and lacking altogether the spirit he had tried to awaken in them, dispute as to which of them is to be the greatest, probably in the coming kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus, instead of a direct rebuke, takes a little child in his arms and bids them remember that those only belong to the kingdom who are of the loving, uncalculating, trustful nature of the little ones. He alone is great in the sight of God who, thoughtless of his own advantage, tries in love of men to bless and help others.

Mark and Luke go on to tell the story of the origin of the Master's saying, "He that is not against us is on our part," while Matthew and Mark add the sayings as to causes of offence, which is only apparently connected with the teaching as to the little ones. Matthew then, breaking the connection, gives us the parable of the lost sheep.

We must confine our attention to the teaching as to true greatness.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. See how little those nearest the Master understood him. Jesus has again and again, both directly and by parable, pointed out that the kingdom he declares is no outward kingdom of the supremacy of the Jews, in which high office may be given to those who are his immediate followers. Yet here the discussion among the disciples has some such thought as its presupposition.

2. The receiving of a child in the name of Jesus does not seem to be relative to the matter in hand. It is probably a reminiscence of some other saying. The point here is best caught in Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

3. Mark ix. 41 again seems to stand out of relation to the context. In Matt. x. 42 it is intelligible.

4. In Matt. xviii. 6 and Mark ix. 42 the use of "little ones" appears to be metaphorical; the phrase stands for the followers of Jesus. The same seems to be true of Matt. xviii. 10, 14.

5. The parable here, Matt. xviii. 12–13, does not naturally fall into the place given to it by the writer. (Note that v. 11 is an interpolation; *v.* R.V.).

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Illustrate from the matter given in connection with these passages the manner in which the sayings of Jesus were handed down after his death. The context was often lost. The sayings were further grouped round new and often different incidents. The compilers of the gospels continued the process and introduced sayings with the origin of which they were unacquainted into circumstances which seemed to suit. That they did so without very careful consideration is shewn from the fact that the only connection with the matter in hand is sometimes the chance resemblance of a word; *e.g.*, the transition from the mention of offending the little ones to the theme of the offending member (Matt. xviii. 6, 7; Mark ix. 42, 43). (See Mr Carpenter's "Gospels.")

2. Discuss the question as to how far the followers of Jesus misunderstood him. Call to mind the current thought of the Messianic kingdom which they shared. (Consult "Life in Palestine," chap. vi.)

3. Dwell on Jesus' conception of true greatness as service. Look out the lesson text and the appended references. Illustrate from Paul's figure of the body, where each member fares best only in so far as it best serves the others. In what way may a little child remind us of this? Is simple, uncalculating delight in helping others the spirit in which the true greatness of life alone comes?

V. Questions.

1. How do we explain the divergences of the different accounts from one another, and their lack of internal connection?
2. Is the narrow selfishness (to which we usually apply the word) at all likely to make a man great?
3. What do you practically understand the lesson text to mean? What do you mean by service? Is to realise one's own noblest possibilities the highest service we can render to our fellows?
4. Could a man like Charles Darwin be called the servant of all?
5. Distinguish between childlikeness and childishness.
6. Do you think that Jesus himself illustrates the meaning of the incident and the lesson text?

LESSON XXVI.

JESUS AND THE LITTLE CHILDREN.

(Mark x. 13-16; Luke xviii. 15-17; Matthew xix. 13-15.)

LESSON TEXT.— "Suffer the little children to come to me; . . . for of such is the kingdom of God."— MARK x. 14.

READ the three passages referred to. Turn also to Matt. xviii. 1-3.

I. THE THREE ACCOUNTS.

There is again discrepancy as to place. From Luke xvii. 11 the incident appears to take place as Jesus journeys through Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. In Mark and Matthew that journey lies through Peræa, and the incident takes place in "the borders of Judæa and beyond Jordan" (Mark x. 1; Matt. xix. 1). (Refer carefully to a map.)

In the narration of the incident itself the main variations are that Matthew speaks of the kingdom of heaven, while Mark and Luke give kingdom of God; that the saying of Jesus, Mark x. 15 (Luke xviii. 17), is not given by Matthew in connection with this incident, but as part of last lesson (Matt. xviii. 3); and that the beautiful touch in Mark x. 16 does not occur in either of the other gospels.

These facts do but confirm our ideas of the origin of the gospels. The tradition is apparently not certain of the route of that memorable last journey. The precise connection of these words of Jesus has been forgotten; Matthew gives in last lesson what Mark and Luke give in this. The fourth gospel, coming still later, has so transformed the history of Jesus that we find in it no trace at all of either the journey or the incidents.

II. THE INCIDENT AND ITS SETTING.

As we have seen, Jesus had to leave Galilee because of the growing opposition of the authorities (lesson xxiii.). He goes northward toward Cæsarea Philippi, weighed down by the burden of coming disaster, and there, as if putting them to test, wins from the disciples the notable confession which Peter voices. (See Mark viii. 27 f.; Luke ix. 18 f.; Matt. xvi. 13 f.) He tries to explain to them that he must go up to Jerusalem to declare his message there too, in the stronghold of the old religion, at the time of the feast, when all Israel will be there to hear. He does not conceal from them his apprehension that it may mean disaster and even death. None the less does he feel it right to go and make the attempt.

His disciples seem to have had no real sense of the burden their Master is carrying. Peter has ventured to reprove him for his apprehensions; others have been disputing as to the chief places in the kingdom of the Messiah; now, as the little children are brought to Jesus for his blessing, they officiously would drive them away. It must all have been very irksome to the Master, moving under the shadow of coming disaster; and he feels as though it were good indeed to have the little ones about him. He is indig-

nant with the disciples, calls the children to him, takes them in his arms, lays his hands upon them with words of blessing, bids the disciples remember that men can enter the kingdom of God only when they come like little children.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is used only by Matthew; "kingdom of God" is used by all three, including Matthew. The probability seems to be that the former phrase is of later origin, and does not occur in the earliest tradition as to the teaching of Jesus. In the lesson text, accordingly, prefer the form given in the earliest of the gospels.

2. The fact that the mothers brought their children to Jesus need not at all presuppose their belief that he was the Messiah. That, indeed, would be historically indefensible. It was customary thus to bring children to the rabbis, and Jesus was well known as the great new teacher from Galilee.

3. When one compares last lesson with this, it seems difficult to separate the two incidents from one another. The sayings of Jesus about the little children were remembered. The occasions which led to his using them were forgotten. Out of it all the little scene of our lesson stands clear in all three gospels.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Make the outline of the history of Jesus clear, so as to lead up to our lesson. The bright opening ministry in Galilee, followed by the time of growing opposition on the part of the religious leaders, gives place to exile. Then, with forebodings of the end, comes the resolve to go up to the feast. It is on the road thither, misunderstood by his closest followers, and perhaps unwilling to burden them with his sense of approaching ill, that the incident of the lesson takes place.

2. Simplicity, sincerity, receptiveness, suggest themselves as key-notes for the lesson text. Only by them does one enter into true greatness of life. What the wonderful unknown world about it is to the little child, God's universe is to the "children of the kingdom." Only the very ignorant man thinks that he knows everything. The more we know and understand about life, the more we feel that we are indeed only beginning. The shallow man with his glib rule for everything is in religion, as in practical life, a very long way from that fineness and largeness of life for which the kingdom stands. "No man knows so little as the man who has not yet learned that he knows nothing." The last story in George MacDonald's "Dealings with the Fairies" gives a good illustration. Swinburne says, "All heaven, in every baby born, reveals itself." Wordsworth's Ode is full of the same suggestion.

V. Questions.

1. Trace the story of Jesus as immediately preceding the incident of our lesson. (Give weight to the effect on Jesus of the news of the death of John.)
2. Where did it take place? Is there any uncertainty? If so, why?
3. Did the disciples require the lesson?
4. Does it take a great man to know how little he knows and is? Is the converse true of men who have not yet begun to be great?
5. In what respects was Jesus himself like the little child in his arms?
6. What did Jesus mean by the kingdom of God?
7. Is the kingdom of heaven the same thing? Which phrase did Jesus use? Give your reasons.

LESSON XXVII.

JESUS AND ZACCHEUS.

(Luke xix. 1–10.)

LESSON TEXT.—"He sought to see Jesus."—LUKE xix. 3.

READ the story, keeping in mind the question of its probability. Look out Jericho on the map. How far was it from Jerusalem?

I. THE NARRATIVE.

Luke alone records this incident. In addition to that fact, the unexplained recognition of Zaccheus and his calling, the unnecessary offence which the selection as his host of a tax-gatherer, who, by his own confession, had been guilty of false swearing and extortion, would give to the expectant and friendly concourse of the followers of Jesus, have led some critics, such as Keim (vol. v. p. 68) and Pfleiderer, to look upon the narrative as one told to make clear the attitude of Jesus toward an outcast who was not a Jew. To them it expresses in the form of a story the thought which we find in Paul (Gal. iii. 9–29; Rom. iv. 11 f.). The fact that the name means "pure" has been held to be additional evidence.

On the other hand, we may easily conjecture that Jesus had heard something about the man from some of those about him, and that he saw here an opportunity of helping an outcast to be filled with the hope of a new and better life. In either case the beauty of the story and its lesson are equally valuable to us.

II. THE SETTING OF THE INCIDENT.

The excitement among the people gathering to Jerusalem for the passover has been greatly raised by rumours that the new prophet from Galilee, whom his disciples declare to be the Messiah, is coming up to the feast. Now, at any rate, it will become clear whether it is indeed he who is to deliver Israel or not. Some have come with him from Galilee. Others have joined the little band as it came south through Peræa. As toward evening they enter the city of palms, the inhabitants throng the streets. Zaccheus, the well-known head of the customs in Jericho, runs on in advance, and, being a little man, climbs up into a tree to catch a glimpse of the prophet about whom there is such a commotion. To his astonishment he is summoned to come down. The friend of the publicans bids him come and receive him as his guest. On the threshold of the house the tax collector, touched by the kindness of Jesus, turns to the people and vows that he will do all in his power to make amends for past wrong; and the Master adds, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. Jericho was an important centre. Not only the products of the town, but all that passed through it on the great road to

Jerusalem, would pass through the hands of the tax collectors. Zaccheus was one of the superior customs officers over the necessarily large staff. (See the R.V. in verse 2.)

2. For an account of the tax collectors and the hatred with which they were regarded by the Jews, see lesson v. and Mr. Carpenter's "Life in Palestine," chap. iii. paragraphs 24 and 25.

3. The fact that Jesus calls Zaccheus by name presents a formidable difficulty. It is, of course, possible that, as they drew near to the place, some of the people of Jericho round Jesus may have pointed the man out and told who he was. It is also possible that Jesus may have spoken at first by way of testing the man and discovering whether he was indeed as bad as his reputation.

4. Verse 8 suggests that the ill opinion entertained of Zaccheus was not without foundation. The Jewish law required that one-fifth part should be added to the amount wrongfully taken (Num. v. 6, 7). Roman law exacted a fourfold restitution from publicans who were *convicted* of extortion. (See also Ex. xxii. 1. Compare A.V. and R.V. of verse 8)

5. "He also is a son of Abraham," in verse 9, may mean that Zaccheus was a Jew, or may, in the mouth of the compiler of the gospel, mean that he was so not by birth, but because of his change of heart. See the passages from Paul referred to above.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Dwell upon the features of this pathetic journey to Jerusalem under the shadow of the approaching end. Try to make clear the thought of Jesus. His attempt to declare his message in the stronghold of official religion must have seemed to him doomed beforehand to failure. The fate of John may well have been present to his mind.

2. Try to imagine whether there may not have been something more than curiosity in the heart of the tax collector as a reason for his eagerness to see Jesus. May he not possibly have heard that Matthew, one of his own class, was amongst the followers of this new teacher? Possibly he may have been among the hearers of John, and the desire of a new life rose in him afresh when he heard that Jesus was coming.

3. Dwell on the tender power of the spirit of Jesus. He had hope for every man, and so helped them to have hope for themselves. It was thus that in after days his message of good-will was able to raise up children of promise from among the poor and sinful of the world.

V. Questions.

1. Do you think that this incident is historical? Does your answer to this question affect the moral value of the story?
2. Why was a crowd gathering round Jesus as he drew near to Jerusalem? What did Jesus think the end of this journey would mean?
3. Can you really help a man with whom you have no sympathy? Does this suggest to you the secret of the power of Jesus and his later followers to fill the world with new hope?
4. Can fear of punishment do real work toward making men better?
5. Zaccheus "sought to see Jesus." "We needs must love the highest when we see it." Paul at his conversion saw Jesus for the first time. Would not the power of our true life be greater over us if we really saw what it means? May seeing what it was in Jesus help us? Can we see it elsewhere?

LESSON XXVIII.

JESUS ENTERING JERUSALEM.

(Mark xi. 1–10; Luke xix. 29–38; Matthew xxi. 1–11; John xii. 12–15.)

LESSON TEXT.—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets."—MATT. xxiii. 37; LUKE xiii. 34.

READ and compare carefully the different accounts. Refer to a map of the environs of Jerusalem for the route followed in entering the city. Refer to Zech. ix. 9.

I. THE GOSPEL RECORDS.

The entry to Jerusalem is set forth in practically the same form in all four gospels. There are, of course, variations in detail. In the synoptics Jesus appears to have gone right on from Jericho to Jerusalem. In the fourth gospel Jesus is, for some time before, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and makes the entry of the city from Bethany. Other differences, which it is beyond the scope of this lesson to discuss, help to throw light on the relation of the fourth gospel to the other three. See John xii. 1–11, 16–19.

Detailed differences in the synoptics will be spoken of in paragraph three.

II. THE STORY.

Having spent the night with Zaccheus in Jericho, Jesus set out next morning for Jerusalem. With him, in addition to his disciples, there are many who are going up to the feast. Among these there is much excitement: Surely now, when the Galilean prophet comes to the holy city, we shall see whether, as some say, he is the Messiah or not. Curiosity draws others, until when they draw near to the city, and Jesus, feeling the deep meaning of his mission, enters, not on foot, but mounted on an ass, the crowd burst into shouts of Hosannah, and spread their garments and palm branches in the way. To the people in the city, stirred somewhat by the shouts, they say, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." The entry does not seem to have attracted the notice of the authorities, for we hear nothing of it among the charges at the trial. The passing enthusiasm of a crowd of passover pilgrims at the feast meant but little, as none were better able than Jesus to understand.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. We do not know certainly where Bethphage (*Beth-fa-gé*) was. To say that it was near Bethany is only to repeat the statement of the gospels. Origen says it was a village where the priests lived.

2. The episode of the ass's colt presents difficulty. The synoptics apparently look on the incident as illustrating supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus. John xii. 14 is simpler.

The matter has evidently taken on colour from men's referring Zech. ix. 9 to Jesus in later days. John xii. 16 almost says so. The resulting difficulties are obvious. Jesus is made to enter

Jerusalem amid a shouting crowd, and yet is mounted on an unbroken ass's colt "whereon no man ever yet sat" (Mark xi. 2; Luke xix. 30). Matthew, misled by the customary parallelism of the prophetic style, makes Jesus enter the city riding upon both the colt and its mother: "They brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon" (Matt. xxi. 7).

3. Later days, having come to regard Jesus as the Messiah, naturally look upon this entry of the city as a conscious claim to the office on the part of Jesus. The cry of the multitude in each of the four different forms in which it has come down to us shews that all the four gospels so regarded it. But the light thrown on the matter by Matt. xxi. 11 suggests that the crowd had no such thought. It is, at least, open to question whether Jesus had.

4. There is no certainty as to what the multitude shouted. Agreement as to the words "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" gives to them a strong historical probability.

5. The beautiful incident in Luke xix. 41 is not found in any other source. From its nature it seems to fit the hour of failure better than the moment of triumphal entry.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Make the scene clear. Mirror the excitement of the crowds gathering to the city; the rumours about the great prophet from Galilee; the hopes of the disciples. Turn to Farrar, for instance, for local colouring and the points in the famous scene where, turning the corner of the hill, Jerusalem suddenly bursts into sight. Try to interpret the thought of Jesus himself in the light of all that we have learned of his forebodings and his resolute determination to face the worst.

2. Let the lesson text suggest the relation between religion established and authoritative and religion expanding into ever fuller life. Jerusalem may well stand for the one, Jesus for the other. Elsewhere Jesus says: Your fathers persecuted the prophets; you build monuments to them and persecute their successors. The inspiration of yesterday becomes the revered and authoritative form, which to-day tries to hinder any further advance. The Spanish inquisition was born of zeal for the truth of yesterday. The modern heresy hunt is sometimes its twin brother. Only a church with no fixed creed can hope to grow with growing truth. Dogma is fixed. The life of religion lies in its sense of the ever-expanding revelation of God. That explains why so many great religious teachers, from Amos downwards, have been the bitter opponents of the religious teaching of their time.

V. Questions.

1. How far was Jerusalem from Bethany? Describe the road from Jericho. What incident does Jesus describe as happening there? Point out the place on the hill where the city burst into sight as you approach it.
2. Tell the story as clearly as you can of the arrival of the Galilean teacher at the holy city.
3. How many accounts of it have we? Wherein do they differ? By what belief have they been modified?
4. Jerusalem was devoted to the religion of the past. How was that likely to determine her attitude towards any higher thought? Does that help to explain why it was the religious people who murdered Jesus? Were they really religious? If not, why?
5. Can a living religion continue to be expressed by fixed standards? Is it true that creeds are the enemies of religion as soon as they are looked upon as authoritative? In what sense is it true that the apostles of the world have been infidels?

LESSON XXIX.

JESUS AND THE MONEY-CHANGERS.

(Mark xi. 15-19; Luke xix. 45-48; Matthew xxi. 12, 13; John ii. 13-17.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—MATT. vi. 24; LUKE xvi. 13.

READ and compare the above passages, noting specially *when* each account states that the cleansing of the temple took place.

I. THE FOUR ACCOUNTS.

The synoptics place the cleansing of the temple just after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The fourth gospel places it at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Those who are pledged to support the infallible accuracy of all four gospels of course contend that Jesus twice cast out the money-changers from the temple. A comparison of the narratives leads us rather to the conclusion that in the fourth gospel we have but another account of the same event, which the author has transposed to a different situation. There is no place in the fourth gospel for such an event in the account of the closing days of the life of Jesus, and in the synoptics there is no trace of the fact that (if the fourth gospel be correct) the cleansing is performed for the second time. In this matter the synoptics give us the true situation. Such an act was impossible to a solitary unknown Galilean such as Jesus was ere he had commenced his work; when he enters Jerusalem as a well-known prophet, with a crowd of Galileans at his back, the matter is at least possible.

As is to be expected, Mark gives us the clearest account of what happened. The cleansing of the temple occurs on the day after the entry to the city, the night having been spent at Bethany (Mark xi. 11, 12). Luke and Matthew, on the other hand, make the journey from Jericho; the triumphal entry and the expulsion of those who sold in the temple take place on the same day. In Mark, moreover, it is perfectly clear that the cleansing of the temple is the immediate ground on which the authorities seek to destroy him (Mark xi. 18). In Matthew, if not in Luke, the main ground seems to have been in the teaching of Jesus (Matt. xxi. 45, 46; Luke xix. 47).

II. THE INCIDENT.

Jesus, having entered the city, as we saw in last lesson, retired to Bethany (see map) for the night. On the morrow he returns to the city. Curiosity, excited by the events of yesterday, soon gathers a crowd of the pilgrims to the feast about him, and, as he enters the temple to teach, he is followed by a considerable company of Galileans and others. Only a Jew could understand what the temple still meant to Jesus, and the presence in the beautiful outer court of a crowd of chaffering hucksters preparing to make money out of the religious enthusiasm of the people excited his indignation. He turns upon them with a fiery citation from the prophetic books (Isa. lvi. 7; Jer. vii. 11); and the people, catching his passionate anger, drive the dealers and money-

changers from the place. Then he begins in spite of the gathering anger of priest and scribe to unfold the message of his life. Perchance, even yet, Jerusalem may listen to the good news of the unseen kingdom of God.

III Noteworthy Points.

1. The presence of the dealers in all requisites for sacrifice, and of money-changers to provide pilgrims with the half-shekel for the temple tribute, was not forbidden. It formed part of the regular temple administration at the time of the feast. Although extortion was common, it is by no means necessary to suppose that it was the dishonesty of the dealers that provoked the anger of Jesus.

2. The scourge of small cords, which forms a familiar item in the current presentation of this scene, belongs to the fourth gospel, and for those who treat the occasion mentioned in that account as historical has no place here.

3. All the gospels are agreed that Jesus was compelled to take precautions against the evil intent of his enemies. The fourth gospel says he went away and hid himself (John xii. 36); the others record that every evening he went forth from the city, possibly to the house of Simon the leper, or, if the fourth gospel be correct, to that of Lazarus (Mark xi. 19; Luke xxi. 37; Matt. xxi. 17).

4. Mark xi. 16 adds a point to the incident which is not recorded elsewhere. The reference is possibly to those who used the temple courts as a short cut instead of going round.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to give concrete reality to the persons and incidents of the lesson. Refer to Keim or the "Bible for Learners" for details. Recall lesson four, and turn to Mr. Carpenter's "Palestine" for an account of the temple buildings. Place Bethany and make the evenings there graphic. Try to understand the excitement about the Galilean prophet among the crowds gathering for the feast. Imagine the thoughts of the disciples, and the quiet, intense strength of Jesus, to whom alone the final issue begins to be clear.

2. Contrast the religion of Jesus with this religion of the temple, which is a business and a calling. Remember that the priestly party (the Sadducees) were an aristocracy, to whom religion was a grand and impressive ceremonial, lending dignity as well as revenue to their order. A religion without priest or temple or ceremony, which was a matter of common living, was wholly beyond their thought. A parallel scene may be found where Amos confronts the priest at Bethel, the royal sanctuary (Amos vii. 10 on). Recall what was said in lesson six.

V. Questions.

1. What does the fourth gospel say as to the cleansing of the temple? Do you think the incident took place as it records? Give reasons.
2. Are the other gospels agreed as to the day on which Jesus drove the dealers out of the temple? How could such divergences arise?
3. Where was Bethany? At whose house may Jesus have stayed? Why did he not remain in Jerusalem?
4. Why did Jesus drive the dealers and money-changers out of the temple? In condemning them did he at the same time condemn the priests? As a result of his action what did they at once determine to do?
5. Contrast religion as a business with religion as an inspiration.

LESSON XXX.

JESUS AND THE ROMAN COIN.

(Mark xii. 13-17; Luke xx. 20-26; Matthew xxii. 15-22.)

LESSON TEXT.—"He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."—JOB v. 13; *cf.* 1 COR. iii. 19.

READ the passages referred to above. Recall carefully what was said as to government and taxation in lesson five.

I. THE SOURCES.

The incident is recorded without any considerable variation in all three synoptics. It bears all the marks of a well-remembered scene, and the variations do but corroborate the sense of its historical accuracy. As is the case with so many graphic details of the life of Jesus, this story is not found in the fourth gospel.

II. THE NARRATIVE.

Jesus continues day by day to teach in the temple, and again and again the authorities seek occasion to entrap him or to throw discredit on his teaching. It is all to no purpose. The keen sense of the master breaks through their technicalities, and time after time his opponents have to retire discomfited.

On this occasion certain Pharisees and some of the Herodian party raise the old and burning question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" Judas the Galilean had paid for his denial of that question with his life. In it were bound up the hopes of the national party, with whom Jesus, the Galilean, was supposed to have sympathy. If Jesus said "Yes," his hold on the people was for ever gone. If he said "No," the Roman authorities would not be slow to interpose. His foes come with flattering words, "We know that *you* are not afraid to say what you think." Then they put their question. But Jesus meets craft with craft. Bring me a denarius, he says. They give him one on which is Cæsar's head. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, . . . *and to God the things that are God's.*" We can well imagine the crushing force, in the mouth of Jesus, of his last words to these crafty servants of a party. The master rises, as he says them, to the full majesty of perfect earnestness and eager zeal for the eternal verities of life; and the servants of its surface shams slink off once more. The wise are again taken in their own craftiness by this noble, guileless peasant from the hills.

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. Save in this connection and in Mark iii. 6 we have no mention of "the Herodians." Josephus speaks of a faction in Palestine who were devoted to the family of Herod the Great. Probably the reference is in both cases the same. The Pharisees were bitterly opposed to Roman domination, and led the popular demand that God's people should have no king but Jahweh. The Herodians were supporters of the royal house. They make

common cause against Jesus. All authority ranges itself against the poor prophet from the ranks. (Remember that Herod the Great was an Idumean. See Mr. Carpenter's "Palestine," par. 21.)

2. The tribute referred to is the hated poll-tax, which, as it was levied on every one, came in for the greatest share of popular hatred.

3. The emperor at this time was Tiberius. The tribute was, in a special sense, paid to him, because the taxes of Judæa went to swell the imperial revenue, and not that of the senate.

4. The "penny" referred to was the Roman denarius, the amount of the poll-tax. Its equivalent in our money is about seventeen cents. If we estimate its worth by purchasing power, it would have to be valued at a much higher rate.

5. "Whose is this image?" It is true that owing to the bitterness of Jewish religious prejudice the Roman coins current in Palestine were struck without the head of the emperor. But, at the time of the passover, money from every shore of the Mediterranean was brought to Jerusalem by those who came to the feast. Possibly the enemies of Jesus produced one of these coins with the image of the emperor in order specially to embarrass Jesus. They were hoist with their own petard.

6. It is, perhaps, interesting to note that in Scotland the lesson has often been used as an argument for the disestablishment of the state church. Government and religion ought to be wholly distinct.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Use the lesson text to remind us of a side of the character of Jesus which we often overlook, its downright cleverness. It comes out again and again in the record of these last days of controversy. The Jesus of the Christian imagination has too often been lacking in virility. It is well now and then to remember that he, too, was "dowered with the scorn of scorn," before which the powerful Pharisee shrank like a withered leaf; that the Jesus who could be so gentle was also mighty in his anger and terrible in his sarcasm; that only a nature of the noblest and most heroic strength could face his foes in face of certain defeat, as Jesus did in these last days. Not only did the high and learned of Jerusalem cower before the splendid power of this son of a Nazareth carpenter, but their emissaries were baffled by the keenness of his insight and made ridiculous by his ready retorts.

2. The unconscious truth of the flattering words with which these Herodians and Pharisees approach Jesus is worthy of remark. There is a wonderful fitness in them. "We know that thou art true and carest for no man" (Mark xii. 14).

V. Questions.

1. Who were the Herodians? Was Judæa in the power of the Idumean dynasty at this time? Was Galilee?
2. What tax is referred to in the lesson? What was its amount?
3. Had Judas the Galilean protested against it? With what result?
4. Did the denarius in Palestine usually bear the image of the emperor? If not, how was it that this one did?
5. Has one any right to apply the words of the lesson text to Jesus? Was he ever angry or sarcastic? Wherein do you see evidence of his vast strength of character?
6. Were the words applied to him on this occasion by his enemies true? What does that imply?

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LESSON XXXI.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

(Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4.)

LESSON TEXT.— "She hath done what she could."— MARK xiv. 8.

READ the two accounts. Refer to a description of the temple (in Mr. Carpenter's "Palestine" for instance), so as to understand the locality of the incident.

I. THE SOURCES.

This incident is preserved for us in two only of the synoptic gospels. Matthew omits it. It has been suggested that he leaves it out as too trivial for the situation, so full of the gravest issues. There is no need to seek for a reason for the omission. Similar cases are a familiar feature of the gospel record. Curiously enough, the account in Luke seems more direct and simple than that in Mark. The fourth gospel has no place for any of the graphic details of these last days in Jerusalem.

II. THE INCIDENT.

Jesus was sitting over against the treasury, in the court of the women, so called because women were not permitted to go further into the sacred building. It was apparently a favourite haunt of the master (John viii. 20). His rough peasant dress is in strange contrast with the fine raiment of many a rich and godly visitor. About him are the disciples, roughly dressed men like himself. He is watching the stream of people of all classes, who, as they enter the temple, are placing free-will offerings in the great boxes which stand there for the purpose. Perhaps there is some sign of approbation among the onlookers when a contribution of gold coin is made. Jesus makes no sign. At length a poor, ill-clad woman comes along and puts in two little copper coins. Jesus points her out. *That* is a gift worthy of your admiration, he says.

George MacDonald has put the incident into the following simple lines: —

"Stately, lang-robit, an' steppin' at ease,
The rich men gaed up the temple ha';
Hasty, an' grippin' her twa baubees,
The widow cam efter, booed an' sma'.

"Their goud rang lood as it fell, an' lay
Yallow an' glintin', bonnie an' braw;
But the fowk roon the Maister h'ard him say
The puir body's baubees was mair nor it a'."

III. NOTEWORTHY POINTS.

1. The four courts of the temple were the court of the Gentiles (beyond which no Gentile was allowed to pass, on penalty of death), the court of the women, the court of Israel, and the court of the priests. Each in turn was smaller, and raised above its predecessor, while from the court of the priests rose the sacred building itself.

2. We learn from the Mischna (the great collection of de-

cisions of the rabbis) that there were in the court of the women thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles for the free-will offerings of the worshippers. Some of these were for specific purposes, others for the support of the temple service in general. The amount of treasure received in this way was enormous.

3. The "two mites" of our story were lepta. A lepton was the eighth part of an as, which in turn was the tenth part of a denarius (see last lesson). They were thus worth about one-fifth of a cent each. It was not permitted to offer a single lepton.

4. The fact that Luke says that Jesus was watching the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury is perhaps a mark of the special attitude of this gospel with respect to wealth. Mark says he watched how *the people* cast their gifts into the treasury.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Jesus always seems to have had an eye for the common and little things of life. The leaven, the little seed, the candle, were the things which caught his attention. He apparently did not feel himself attracted as much by the glamour of showy and obtrusive greatness. He was himself the son of common people. The men he sent out to turn the world upside down for God were Galilean peasants. The people to whom he appealed were of no importance in the eyes of the world. Was he not right? Are not "his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love" indeed the "best portion of a good man's life"? Society is ennobled by unnoticed heroisms. For every deed which claims the admiration of a people, there are countless thousands just as great, of which no one ever hears. The nobility of common life is a theme not easily exhausted; and he who has eyes for it finds, as Jesus did, a great many divine things in the world. Let us never despise common things. Nothing is so common as air or light; nothing is so absolutely indispensable.

2. The meaning of a gift lies in the attitude of the giver. It may be an outcome of meanness or of policy as well as of a generous spirit. No one truly gives unless he gives himself with the gift. As some one has "unchivalrously remarked," "God does not look to what is given, but to what is left." None but the generous can afford not to give presents.

3. Get at the power of the incident. Jesus with the shadow of the cross over him, in the midst of the battle with men who only sought to entrap, has time enough to notice and to rejoice in the good heart of one of the unnoticed folk he loved. It is a mark of a great nature.

V. Questions.

1. Where was the treasury? Describe its position with respect to the other temple courts.
2. What were these gifts for? Who gave them?
3. How much did the widow give? What did Jesus say about it? What was the reason for his verdict?
4. What may the incident teach us? Are there divine possibilities in the commonest lives? How may we learn this from the beginnings of Christianity? What does Paul say about it (see 1 Cor. i. 26–29)?

LESSON XXXII.

THE LAST SUPPER.

(1 Corinthians xi. 23-25; Mark xiv. 12-26; Luke xxii. 7-39; Matt. xxvi. 17-30; John xiii.)

LESSON TEXT.—"This do in remembrance of me."—1 COR. xi. 25; LUKE xxii. 19.

READ and compare the descriptions given above, contrasting specially the account in the fourth gospel with the others. Remember that the letter to the Corinthians is earlier than any of the gospels.

I. THE FIVE ACCOUNTS.

1. PAUL tells us that Jesus at the last supper gave bread to the disciples and after supper passed them the cup, as emblems of the death on the cross, which is to ratify the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit and inward life. He enjoins them, when they meet together afterwards at a common meal, to do so in remembrance of him.

2. MARK'S GOSPEL tells us that Jesus takes the passover meal with his disciples. He refers to the wine as the blood of the covenant. The institution of a memorial meal is not mentioned.

3. LUKE'S GOSPEL gives an account practically the same as Paul's. The cup is the cup of the new covenant, and the injunction, "This do in remembrance of me," is given. The disciples contend as to who is the greatest among them.

4. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL agrees with Mark's. It speaks of the covenant and says not a word as to the institution of the feast as a memorial. The wine is an emblem of the blood shed "for the remission of sins."

5. THE FOURTH GOSPEL differs in almost every point from the others. The supper is not the passover meal, but is held before the passover. There is no mention of the emblematic use of bread and wine or of the request that the meal be made a memorial custom. In their place we are told how the Master washed the feet of the disciples as a token of that spirit of service and help which ought to inspire his followers. The long discourses which follow have no place in the synoptics.

II. JESUS' LAST MEAL WITH THE DISCIPLES.

As the time of the feast draws nigh, the position of Jesus becomes one of ever-increasing danger. The authorities, afraid to arrest him in public because of the danger of tumult, are but awaiting their opportunity. At length Judas, one of the disciples, either disappointed in the Master or possibly, as some suggest, trying to force his hand, offers to lead the servants of the authorities to a place where they may arrest Jesus without disturbance. The teacher himself seems to have had some suspicion of what was happening, and arranged with an unknown friend in the city to let him have a room in which to eat the passover with the disciples. On Thursday he sends two of the disciples to make the necessary preparations.

In the evening, soon after sundown, they gather in the upper chamber to partake together of the lamb of the passover in remembrance of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Ordinarily it was a feast of great gladness and rejoicing. The customary order of the feast seems to have been interrupted, and Jesus tells of his forebodings. Judas has gone out. The end is close at hand. The broken bread and the wine seem to the Master emblems of his own death. That death, he tells the disciples, is to seal a new covenant, the covenant of the good news of the kingdom of God which has been the burden of his teaching. He urges them to hold together, not to allow the companionship to be broken, and

possibly suggests that they recall this last meal when they meet together. Only afterwards did his followers feel the full meaning of his words.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. The tradition has not preserved to us the name of the man in whose house Jesus arranged to eat the passover meal. In Mark and Luke we find a suggestion of miracle in the story of the man with the water-pitcher guiding the disciples to the house.

2. It is almost idle to speculate on the motive which led Judas to turn traitor. Most probably he was filled with the thought that Jesus was the Messiah of Jewish expectation. When he at length found that he was not, he came to the conclusion that the Nazarene was an impostor who had utterly misled him.

3. John xiii. 26, where Jesus proclaims in the presence of the twelve that Judas is about to betray him, is incredible.

4. Possibly some special warning to Peter underlies the narrative of Jesus' prediction of the threefold denial before the crowing of the cock. It was Peter who, on a previous occasion, rebuked the forebodings of the Master (Mark viii. 32). Note that this incident, which the fourth gospel and Luke record as taking place at supper, occurs, according to the other gospels, on the road to the Mount of Olives.

5. From the injunctions found in Paul's letter to the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. xi. 17f.) it is clear that the "Lord's supper" was at first a meal where rich and poor were to share alike, in token of brotherhood and in memory of Jesus. The gradual development of this into a sacrament under the influence of theological and ecclesiastical ideas, until it became the "mass" of the Roman Church, is in bitter contrast to the simple spirit of Jesus. To be true to him, a communion service is but an opportunity of more deeply impressing the sense of brotherhood in loyalty to our common Master.

6. Some critics whose conclusions cannot be lightly disregarded are of opinion that the fourth gospel, in regarding this last supper as an ordinary meal and not as a passover, is more truly historical than the synoptics.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Try to feel the pathos and power of that last meeting. The disciples had left all to follow Jesus; even now they do not half understand the coming blow. Jesus is alone in his clear sense of all that is coming on him. His whole endeavour is to strengthen and prepare his followers for the future. Refer to the account of the last hours of Socrates (Phædo, 114–118).

2. Make clear the original form and meaning of the "Lord's supper." Shew that there was at first no thought of a "sacrament," or of "the atoning efficacy of the death of Christ," or of "the perpetual obligation of the celebration of the eucharist," but merely a meal which men took together in token of brotherhood and as a symbol of their common devotion to Jesus. Remember that three of the gospels say not one word of any command of Jesus with reference to the keeping of the Lord's supper.

LESSON XXXIII.

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

(Mark xiv. 32-52; Luke xxii. 40-53; Matthew xxvi. 31-56; John xviii. 2, 3, 10-12.)

Lesson Text.—"Thy will be done."—Matt. xxvi. 42.

Read the accounts carefully, referring to a map of the environs of Jerusalem for the relative positions of Bethany, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, and Jerusalem. Where is the brook Kidron?

I. The Narratives.

The four accounts of the Master's bitter hour of trial in Gethsemane and his arrest tell substantially the same story. There are several interesting points of difference. In Luke and John, as we saw in last lesson, Jesus' prediction that Peter is to deny him is uttered before they leave the upper room; in Matthew and Mark it is placed on the way out of the city. These two gospels also make Jesus take Peter, James, and John with him into the garden. In Luke they are apparently left at the entrance. In the fourth gospel they all enter. The fourth gospel says nothing of the agony in the garden. Luke alone mentions that an angel came from heaven to strengthen Jesus, and that the suffering of the Master was such that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Matthew and Mark make him find the disciples sleeping three times, Luke only once. Mark alone tells of the young man who, being arrested, left his garment and fled away naked. Luke makes "the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders" come in person to the arrest. The fourth gospel tells that the band who came to arrest Jesus all fell to the ground before him, and makes *Peter* (the other gospels give no name) cut off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest. Matthew alone attributes to Jesus the words in xxvi. 53, as to the twelve legions of angels. All these facts do but point to the gradual growth of the tradition as to the facts of the life of Jesus.

II. The Hour of Conflict and the Arrest.

After singing together the psalm with which the passover feast closed, the little company went into the quiet city on their way to Bethany. They pass through the gate and down the steep slope to the valley of the Kidron, then upward toward the Mount of Olives. Jesus is silent. Enemies are about him. They may even be waiting for him at Bethany. As they pass the entrance to an olive garden, he bids the disciples wait, while he goes on alone to gather strength for the bitter hour of defeat and death. Is there no possible alternative? May not God have still some way of escape for him? A bitter cry for help escapes him. Alone in the darkness, while the disciples sleep, he finds strength; and, when the gleam of torches shews him the approach of the servants of the authorities, Jesus is calm and strong with a strength no suffering can move. The frightened disciples crowd round him. Judas comes forward and tries to kiss his master, but is put on one side with quiet dignity (Luke xxii. 47, 48). His attempt has pointed out the prophet of Nazareth to the band sent to make the arrest, and Jesus is led away prisoner. The disciples had slept in his darkest hour, and now they all forsook him and fled.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. The touch in Matthew and Mark which makes Jesus take Peter, James, and John with him into the garden, that he may not

be all alone in his bitter hour, gives added pathos to the fact that he found them sleeping.

2. The valley of the Kidron seems to have been the same as the valley of Jehoshaphat (John xviii. 2, R.V., marg.).

3. Gethsemane means oil-press. The place probably took its name from the presence of some such press amid the trees. It lay apparently at the foot of the slope of the Mount of Olives.

4. According to Matthew and Mark, Judas kisses Jesus. From the account in Luke it appears as though Jesus refused the salute. This latter is surely the more probable version.

5. Luke's gospel makes Jesus at once heal the ear of the servant of the high priest. The addition is probably of the same character as those we have already referred to (Luke xxii. 43, 44). It is, however, probable that these verses did not form part of the original gospel. They are marked as an early interpolation in the best Greek text. See R.V., marg.

6. That, as Luke records, the chief priests and elders came in person to the arrest of Jesus seems absurd. Events loomed larger in later days than they seemed to those who were present.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Dwell on the way in which Jesus meets this crisis. Although the worst was clear to him at supper, it is not till they are on the road to Bethany that he fully realises what it all means. As in the hour of the temptation, and many times since, he seeks to feel the sense of the nearness of God alone in the silence of night. With the eternities about him God seems near, and strength to take God's way comes.

2. As a mark of the strength of Jesus, note that he had to go alone. It is easy to face danger with a crowd. Only a great nature can strike out a new path and win deliverance for men. This Jesus did. Not even the disciples understood him. Learning, sanctity, position, were all against him. Yet he taught with authority. Now, too, he is but one against the world. He would lean for a moment on the companionship of those that loved him best, but they fall asleep while he prays. It is Jesus who announces the approach of the betrayer. "One with God is a majority."

3. Let that terrible solitary hour of agony help us to feel the intense living reality of Jesus. Theology, in crowning him with an artificial halo, has too often robbed us of the Master who "learned obedience by the things which he suffered."

4. It may be interesting to discuss the character of Judas. Love of gain alone seems utterly inadequate to explain his conduct. What of the modern theory that he betrayed Jesus because he thought that then the Master would be forced to use the supernatural power which, as the Messiah, he was believed to possess? Can you not suggest a better hypothesis?

V. Questions.

1. Where was Gethsemane? How did Jesus go to it from the city?
2. Why does the fourth gospel say nothing about the bitter hour of the conflict in the garden? Do you remember whether it said anything about the temptation?
3. Try to estimate the strength of Jesus. How was it shewn?
4. What did the disciples do when Jesus was arrested?
5. What additions to the story do we find in the gospel of Luke?

LESSON XXXIV.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

(**Mark xiv. 53—xv. 15; Luke xxii. 54—xxiii. 25; Matthew xxvi. 57—xxvii. 26; John xviii. 12—xix. 16.**)

LESSON TEXT.—"To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth."—JOHN xviii. 37.

READ and compare the passages cited.

I. THE FOUR ACCOUNTS.

1. MARK'S GOSPEL tells us that Jesus is led before the high priest, and there confessing that he is the Messiah is pronounced worthy of death. Peter denies him at the challenge of a serving-maid. Early in the morning the council meets and delivers him to Pilate. He offers to release Jesus, but they clamour for Barabbas and demand that Jesus be crucified. Pilate assents.

2. LUKE'S GOSPEL tells us that they brought Jesus to the high priest's house. Peter denies him. The attendants beat Jesus. The council gathers in the morning and tries to get Jesus to admit that he is the Christ, the son of God. He says, "If I tell you ye will not believe, and if I ask you ye will not answer." They bring him before Pilate and charge him with stirring up the people. Pilate sends him to Herod, who mocks him and sends him back. Pilate pronounces Jesus innocent, and yet finally, releasing Barabbas, delivers Jesus up to be crucified.

3. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL says that Jesus is led to Caiaphas, the high priest, where he is pronounced guilty of blasphemy. Peter denies him. In the morning they take counsel and bring Jesus bound to Pilate. Judas destroys himself. Pilate finds Jesus guiltless and proposes to release him. Pilate's wife dreams, and warns her husband to have nothing to do with this "righteous man." Pilate finally, after washing his hands to clear himself, delivers up Jesus to the cross and releases Barabbas.

4. THE FOURTH GOSPEL says that Jesus is first taken to Annas, where Peter denies him. Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas. Peter denies his master a second time. They then bring Jesus to Pilate. Pilate has a private interview with Jesus in the palace, into which the Jews will not enter, "that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover." Pilate pronounces Jesus innocent, and proposes to release him; but the Jews clamour for Barabbas. Pilate scourges Jesus, again pronounces him innocent, and after a second interview, though desirous of releasing him, delivers him over to be crucified in obedience to the clamour of the Jews. "Now it was the preparation for the passover: it was about the sixth hour."

II. THE TRIAL.

It is difficult to be at all sure of the exact course of events which led up to the sentence of death, not only because the accounts differ somewhat from one another, but because we know very little as to the rules which regulated the conduct of the Sanhedrin. (See "Life in Palestine," chap. iii. par. 19.) The general course of events ran somewhat as follows:—

Jesus, shortly after midnight, is brought before a hastily summoned gathering of some of the Sanhedrin. Witnesses are called. His sayings as to the temple are quoted against him, and finally some words of his own in reply to a direct question of Caiaphas prove him guilty of blasphemy. That he said that he was the Messiah, where such an admission was certain to be misunderstood, is most unlikely. The answer in Luke, quoted above, is much more probable. Blasphemy was punishable by stoning to death. Jesus is denied by Peter, and is left to the tender mercies of the servants of the high priest till dawn. Another meeting of the Sanhedrin is then held, at which it is determined to bring Jesus before Pilate as one who stirred up the people. The blasphemy

and the charge before Pilate were both clearly proven from the standpoint of the orthodoxy of that time, and the accusers of Jesus probably honestly believed them to be true. He was a destroyer of Jewish religion and permitted his followers, at any rate, to hold that he was the Messiah.

Pilate receives no answer to his questions when Jesus is brought before him. To answer was only to be misunderstood. But Jesus does not look like a rebellious fanatic, and Pilate is impressed by his calm and dignified bearing. People are crowding into the courtyard, and he suggests that the prisoner he is to release at the passover be this Galilean. But the crowd, instigated by their leaders, clamour for the release of Barabbas, the leader of a recent popular revolt, and demand that this destroyer of religion be crucified. Pilate finally, to save himself trouble, scornfully grants their request. One accursed Galilean, more or less, was in his eyes but a small matter. It is easier to have Jesus crucified than to face the possibility of a religious riot in Jerusalem.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. Note the gradual growth of the story in the later gospels. The discrepancies between the fourth and the synoptics are marked.

2. From the point of view of a religious Jew of the time of Jesus the course of the authorities is perfectly justifiable. Jesus was in every sense a heretic, and to all authoritative religions heresy is a crime. Where they have had the power, they have punished it with torture and death. Jesus not only disregarded the law, but taught men that there was a higher authority, that of human welfare.

3. In estimating the conduct of Pilate, we must remember that to him the Jewish religion was an unintelligible fanaticism. To order one of these mad people to the cross when his fellows clamoured for it was a matter which might seem unjust, but was of so little importance that it never cost him a thought. Two others were to be crucified that morning, anyhow.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. What dignity surrounds the figure of this peasant teacher through it all! Defence was impossible. He was guilty. He had found a larger and nobler thought of life and religion and God. He had broken with the religious thought and habit of his people. His heart is full to overflowing with the spring of the new life and its message of the kingdom which men enter as little children. On trial before religious officialism, or as a fanatic before the Roman, he has no defence. He is silent, unmoved, bearing all that traditional religion and prejudice inevitably have in store for one who has outgrown them.

2. Try to shew that this is true in every age. The authoritative tradition of yesterday has always been the most bitter opponent of the higher religion of to-day. The inquisition is the child of the authority of the church. Only those who love truth, not fettered to the letter of a fixed statement, but free and ever-growing, welcome the message of expanding thought and life.

3. Try to feel the infinite pathos of the judgment of his world on Jesus. Full of love and hope for men, his fellows, they have only hatred and the cross for him. The best of men, he is accounted amongst the worst. Even those who loved him have deserted him, and he has to go out to death alone for love of God, truth, and humanity.

LESSON XXXV.

THE DEATH OF JESUS.

(Mark xv. 16-47; Luke xxiii. 26-56; Matthew xxvii. 27-61; John xix. 16-42.)

LESSON TEXT.—"Endured the cross, despising the shame."—HEB. xii. 2.

READ the above passages, noting how uncertain the gospels are as to details even of the crucifixion of Jesus.

I. THE FOUR NARRATIVES.

1. MARK. The soldiers place a crown of thorns on the head of Jesus, and mock him ere they lead him out to crucifixion. They compel Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. At Golgotha, the place of crucifixion, they offer Jesus wine and myrrh. At the third hour they crucify him and cast lots for his garments. The priests and scribes, and two robbers who were crucified with him, mock him. From the sixth hour to the ninth there is darkness over all the land. At the ninth hour Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and with a loud cry gave up the ghost. The veil of the temple is rent. The centurion confesses that Jesus is the Son of God. The women behold from afar. Joseph of Arimathæa begs the body from Pilate, and lays it in a tomb hewn from the rock.

2. LUKE. Here we read, in addition, that Jesus turned and spoke to the women who followed, wailing; that Jesus, before being raised on the cross, said, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." One of the malefactors refuses to rail at Jesus, and Jesus says to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The closing words of Jesus are: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

3. MATTHEW. The points to be noticed in this account are: The soldiers offer Jesus wine and *gall*. Both robbers revile him. There is an earthquake at the death of Jesus; and the bodies of the saints are raised, and appear to many in the city *after the resurrection of Jesus*.

4. JOHN. Here we read that the incident of the crown of thorns took place before the sentence. Jesus carries his cross himself. The Jews complain to Pilate of the superscription on the cross. The women and one of the disciples stand by the cross, and Jesus commends his mother to the care of the latter. The last words of Jesus are: "It is finished." The soldiers break the legs of the two thieves, but, finding that Jesus is dead, forbear to do so in his case, but pierce his side instead. Jesus is not *sentenced* till the sixth hour (noon).

II. THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS.

The death sentence was pronounced while it was still early in the morning. Probably by eight o'clock the soldiers detailed for that duty have scourged the Jew who refused to answer, and are escorting the little band of three prisoners through the city. Each carries the cross-beam on which he is to hang. But Jesus, possibly, never physically robust, cannot be urged to keep up with the rest. The soldiers lay hold on a chance passer-by, and compel him to carry the beam. Ere long they come to a little hill outside the city, where they erect the three upright posts for the crosses. Then the prisoners are stripped, and, lying on the ground, have their extended arms bound and then nailed through the palms of the hands to the cross piece. This is then lifted to the top of the upright, so that the victim's feet are just clear of the ground; and the feet are nailed to the upright post. This is what they did to Jesus.

From far off some of the women saw the figures raised on the crosses. But no friend is near the poor suffering peasant, tortured by the most intense pain under the blaze of the noonday, because

he believed in truth and God. Happily, early in the afternoon, with a loud cry he passed away. So eager and sensitive a body could not long endure the torture which followed and completed those terrible days in Jerusalem, when it still seemed possible that men might hear and turn, and Jesus hoped against hope.

Joseph of Arimathæa, perhaps one whom the Master's words had touched, begs the body from Pilate, and, helped by the women who had watched, lays it in a rock-hewn tomb. The city is full of rejoicing. It is the jubilant passover time. Pharisee and priest can now without anxiety join in the feasting. Jesus has been crucified.

III. Noteworthy Points.

1. The loving elaboration of the tradition readily gathered round the death of the Messiah. Even in the earliest gospel, darkness is over all the earth at his death, the veil of the temple, emblem of the old dispensation, is rent, and a Gentile centurion confesses that this is the son of God. Note the growth of such material in the later gospels. In the fourth, Jesus is the paschal lamb, not a bone of which was to be broken (Ex. xii. 46).

2. Matthew says the soldiers offered Jesus wine and gall, where the earliest gospel speaks of wine and myrrh (an opiate). The change is probably due to the influence of the Old Testament sayings in Ps. lxix. 21, which the early church referred to the Messiah and therefore to Jesus.

3. Among the portents which grew up in the early tradition, that recorded in Matt. xxvii. 52, 53, is interesting. What became of these raised saints in the interval between the death of Jesus and his resurrection? Did they afterwards return to their graves? In those days men did not ask that kind of question. The whole air was full of miracle.

4. The incident of the "penitent thief," in Luke, springs out of the thought that, although the *Jews* (Luke xxiii. 25, xxiv. 20) crucified Jesus, even the thief on the cross recognises the true character of the Messiah.

IV. Lesson Hints.

1. Make the crucifixion a simple, terrible fact. The world of religion has too often dealt in just such fashion with lovers of the truth. Let the horror of it all help us to stand firm for an ever wider knowledge and fearless liberty. The fear that fuller inquiry and more accurate information may rob us of cherished beliefs is in our own time what the spirit of those who crucified Jesus was in theirs.

2. Try to make clear that the reverence of the church for the Christ, which has exalted him as a supernatural personality, and invested even the imperfect records of his life with a divine authority, has taken from us the Jesus whose simple life and teaching are the real foundation of Christianity. Criticism is the endeavour to get at the real Jesus. To have lost the Jesus of mediæval imagination in the process is a gain.

V. References.

Keim and the "Bible for Learners" are on the whole the most useful. Refer also to the chapter on the fourth gospel in the latter. Gay's terrible, almost brutal, picture of the crucifixion, reproduced in the *Review of Reviews* (Eng. ed.) for September, 1894, may yet help one to understand what really happened.

LESSON XXXVI.

THE RESURRECTION.

(1 Corinthians xv. 3-8; Mark xvi. 1-8; Luke xxiv.; Acts i. 3-11; Matthew xxviii.; John xx., xxi.)

Lesson Text.—"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above."—Col. iii. 1.

Read the passages referred to. Compare the later gospel accounts with each other and with that in Paul, our earliest witness. Refer to the still later account at the end of Mark xvi. Note how Paul, in Gal. i. 15, 16, describes the appearance of Jesus to him on the Damascus journey.

I. The Five Accounts.

1. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian church, tells us what he had learned about the resurrection of Jesus. This is the earliest testimony we have. The gospels were not compiled till later. The appearances of Jesus of which he speaks are, in order, to Peter, to the twelve, to five hundred brethren, to James, to all the apostles, to Paul himself. He apparently looks upon all these as of the same character. The appearance to himself is referred to in the letter to the brethren in Galatia as God's having been pleased "to reveal his Son in me."

2. Mark's gospel tells how the three women came to the tomb after sunrise on the first day of the week, found the stone rolled away, saw an angel, and were enjoined to tell the disciples and Peter that they are to see the risen Lord in Galilee. The remainder of chapter xvi., forming the original conclusion to the gospel, has been lost. The present conclusion we shall consider below.

3. Luke's gospel tells us that several women (more than three, Luke xxiv. 10) came to the tomb, saw two angels, told the apostles. Peter comes and finds the tomb empty. Jesus appears to two on the road to Emmaus, near Jerusalem, to Simon, to the eleven, whom he tells to remain in Jerusalem, and then ascends to heaven from near Bethany. In Acts, which is apparently from the hand of the compiler of Luke's gospel, Jesus appears for forty days in Jerusalem, from which the disciples are enjoined not to depart, and while there, in their midst, is seen by them to ascend into heaven.

4. Matthew's gospel tells that late on the *last* day of the week two women came to the tomb. During an earthquake an angel comes and rolls away the stone, and tells the women not to fear, but to go and inform the disciples that the risen Lord goes before them into Galilee: "there shall ye see him." As they go to tell the disciples, Jesus meets them. The eleven disciples go to Galilee, to the "mountain where Jesus had appointed them," and there see him.

5. The fourth gospel says that before dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene finds the stone taken away. She goes and tells Peter and another disciple, who come and find the tomb empty. Jesus then appears to Mary, who goes and tells the disciples. Then, in Jerusalem, he is seen by ten of the disciples; eight days later, still in Jerusalem, by the eleven, and is touched by Thomas. Later, he is seen by the disciples in Galilee.

II. The Underlying Fact.

These accounts do not agree. They contradict one another as to the place, as to the time, as to the persons to whom Jesus is said to have appeared. Only one thing is clear from them,—that, as the first half-century after the death of Jesus elapsed, the early Christians universally came to believe that the body of Jesus rose from the tomb. How, where, or to whom, no one certainly knew. What the actual facts were must be largely a matter of conjecture. Paul suggests that the vision of the risen Lord to Peter was of like nature to that which he himself later experienced and describes as an inward revelation. The stress laid on Galilee and the improbability of the disciples remaining in Jerusalem suggest Galilee as the place. Possibly we may picture the matter as follows:—

At the death of Jesus, the little band who had come with him to the feast were scattered, and ere long made their way home to the village by the lake. There every association brought back to them the presence of the Master, whom they had believed to be

"he that should deliver Israel." Possibly the suggestion of passages in the Old Testament like Ps. xvi. 10, Hos. vi. 2, possibly the sense that the Master was with them still, at length culminated in a vision on the part of Peter in which he saw the Lord. The belief, once created, led at once, in a time of religious tension such as that, to similar experiences on the part of others. Out of these came others, till, when Paul went to Jerusalem as a herald of the gospel, the story he received ran as he tells us. Out of this the accounts which the gospels gather from the tradition of later days grew.

Whether this suggestion of the origin of the belief be adequate or not, it is at once clear that the confused and contradictory accounts of the gospels and Acts do not warrant our thinking of a bodily resurrection of the crucified teacher.

III. Immortality.

Too often it has been stated that, if we do not accept the miracle of the resurrection of the body of Jesus, we must give up our belief in immortality. But to believe that the body of Jesus ascended into heaven after a short sojourn on earth subsequent to the crucifixion is evidently no ground for holding that, though our bodies return to the dust, our spiritual selves return to God to enjoy the things which he "hath prepared for those that love him." That well-nigh universal belief in an immortal hereafter rests upon other grounds. Socrates and Plato held it. It is, for us, bound up with the thought of God as the eternal father, of whom all human wisdom and all human love are only a foreshadowing. To believe in the resurrection and ascension of the body of Jesus is one thing: to hold that he lives for ever in God, and is still with us to help and bless, is another.

IV. Noteworthy Points.

1. Even the translators of the revised version agree that the present conclusion to Mark's gospel does not belong to it in its original form. It is probably a compilation from the other gospels, added here to take the place of the original conclusion, which has been lost. In any case it does not affect the matter on hand. Another and shorter ending is given as well, in the best modern text of the gospel. (See Carpenter's "Gospels," chap. iii. par. 2.)

2. "And was carried up into heaven," in Luke xxiv. 51, was probably lacking in the original form of the gospel (R.V., marg.). Acts i. 9 is the author's own statement.

V. Lesson Hints.

1. Dwell on the point that only after Jesus was crucified, and out of their deepest sense of loss, did the disciples come to that sense of his abiding presence and power which is one of the brightest features of the Christian faith. He was with them always. Paul says, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." Refer to Whittier's poem, "The Master."

2. Distinguish clearly between belief in the reception of the body of Jesus into heaven and our thought of that which the eternal wisdom and love has for his children in the unseen world which death hides from us.

3. Spring follows winter; a deeper life is born of dark hours; the Christ of humanity rose from the tomb of Jesus, the Galilean. "There is a budding morrow in midnight." We rise to higher things "on stepping-stones of our dead selves." Lesson text.

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